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a kick**

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chicken  
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JULY 2005 NO. 72

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green bean salad with corn,  
cherry tomatoes, and basil



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Place all of the ingredients except the sea food in a food processor. Process until marinade is smooth. Place sea food in a large freezer storage bag & marinate 1-2 hours, turning occasionally. Grill or broil seafood. Pour marinade into a small saucepan & cook 2-3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove, brush on seafood every 2-3 minutes while grilling/broiling. Discard marinade. Makes 6-8 servings.



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1/2 jar Dickinson's<sup>®</sup> Apple Butter  
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Preheat oven to 400°F. Brush tortillas with water. Combine sugar and cinnamon; sprinkle over tortillas; cut each tortilla into 8 wedges. Place wedges on cookie sheet. Bake 5-7 minutes or until golden brown. Remove and cool. Combine Apple Butter, Preserves, fruits, orange zest and juice in bowl. Serve fruit salsa with cinnamon chips. Makes about 3 cups of salsa.

Salsa: 2 Granny Smith Apples, cored & chopped, 1 or 2 Kiwi, peeled & chopped,  
1 Orange (Zest & Juice)



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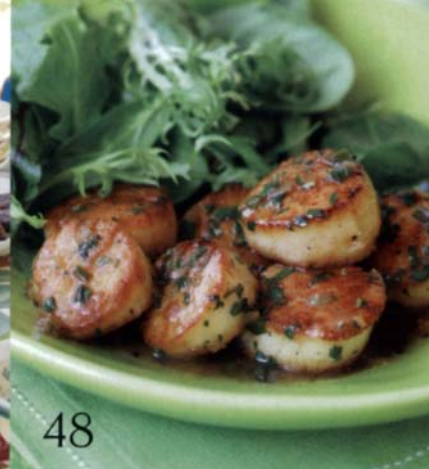


# fine Cooking

JUNE/JULY 2005 ISSUE 72



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### 86c Quick & Delicious



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*Green Bean Salad with Corn, Cherry Tomatoes & Basil*

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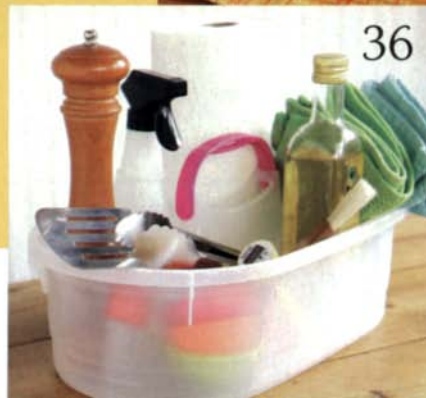
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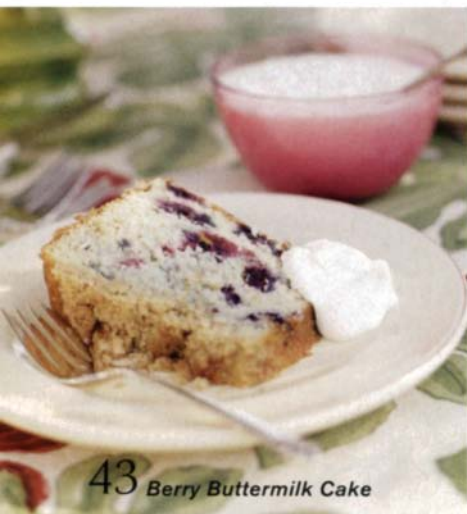
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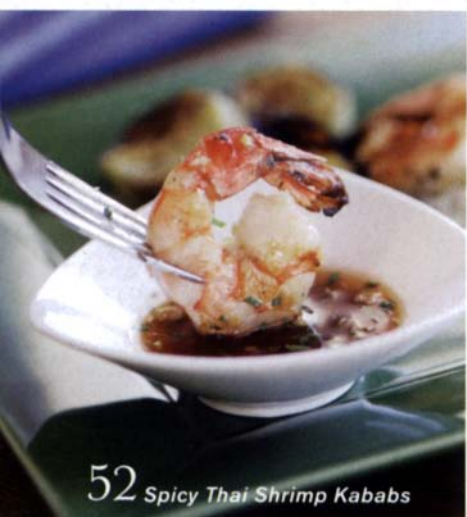
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## Summer's coming

and it's time to take full advantage of the season: What you cook should be fresh, easy, and relaxed to make each summer day last as long as possible. In this issue, there are main-dish salads on p. 86c that are all-in-one meals perfect for weeknights, including wine pairing suggestions on p. 22. (Who says wine doesn't go with salad?) For a casual Saturday night with friends, try our "Stress-Free Summer Supper" on p. 38. And for all those other times, have some fun with the ideas here. Be sure to check the recipe yields to ensure you have enough for everyone you're planning on inviting.

### Mediterranean-Style Supper for Six

The flavors in this menu are perfect for hot-weather dining.

**Sun-Ripened Tomato & Olive Salad** (p. 42)

**Lemony Moroccan-Style Chicken Kebabs** (p. 53), served with **couscous**

**Strawberries with Mint Sugar** (p. 66)

TO DRINK: A rosé from the south of France.

### Celebration Lunch with Family

**An assortment of blanched and raw vegetables with Pesto-Style Salsa Verde** (p. 41) for dipping

**Seared Scallops with Herb Butter** (p. 49)

**Slightly Spicy Sugar Snap Peas** (p. 72)

**Berry Buttermilk Cake with Vanilla-Scented Crème Fraîche** (p. 43)

TO DRINK: A Sauvignon Blanc with good acidity, zingy fruit flavors, and herbal notes.

### Fourth of July Fireworks Shindig

Here's food that's easy to make for a crowd. Appoint a few grillmeister friends to keep an eye on the steaks, and ask a guest to bring chips and a favorite guacamole or salsa.

**Herb-Marinated Skirt Steak** (p. 41)

**Green Bean Salad with Corn, Cherry Tomatoes & Basil** (p. 45) or **Summer Squash Salad with Lemon, Capers & Onion** (p. 46)

**Strawberry Crisp** (p. 67)

TO DRINK: A medium-bodied, Grenache-based red like Côtes du Rhône, or an Australian blend.

### Asian-Inspired Nibbles

Make the summer rolls ahead, and then prep the ingredients for the wings and kebabs. Grill just before guests arrive and serve everything on platters, buffet style, for a light, grazing-style party.

**Chicken Wings with Asian-Style Barbecue Sauce** (p. 61)

**An assortment of Summer Rolls** (p. 56)

**Spicy Thai Shrimp Kebabs** (p. 52)

TO DRINK: A selection of beers would be good here. For the wine drinkers, try dry or off-dry Riesling, or sparkling wine.



25  
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READER SERVICE NO. 51



from the editor

# Cooking together, cooking ahead



Test kitchen manager Jennifer Armentrout and contributing editor Pam Anderson (in blue coats, top and center) make pizza dough and marinara with *Fine Cooking* readers at Clarke distributors in South Norwalk, Connecticut. Bottom photo: The rewards—pizzas and salads in Simon Pearce dishes.

I have to admit, we don't get out of our Newtown, Connecticut, offices as much as we'd like to. I'm always wishing for more opportunities to get together with our readers, and this month, I got my wish. Along with contributing editor Pam Anderson and test kitchen manager Jennifer Armentrout, I got to spend a Saturday cooking

with about 20 *Fine Cooking* fans on some pretty amazing equipment. Thanks to Jennifer's planning and our gracious hosts, Clarke, the New England distributor of Wolf Sub-Zero appliances in South Norwalk, Connecticut, we were able to spend a morning cooking recipes from *Fine Cooking* that highlighted one theme: cooking ahead.

First we made marinara, pizza dough, vinaigrettes, and rustic tart dough—all things that keep well in the freezer or the refrigerator for a week or more, so you can make them

when you've got time on the weekend. Then we turned these recipes into great weeknight dishes: pizzas, elegant salads, chicken and sausage dishes, fruit tarts, and more. (The Westport, Connecticut, Wild Oats grocery store donated the ingredients for our menu, and Monini donated plenty of extra-virgin olive oil.)

I was so impressed with the plucky group of *Fine Cooking* readers who jumped into an unfamiliar situation,

worked elbow to elbow, created an amazing lunch, and got to know each other in the process.

We were rewarded for our hard work by sitting down in Clarke's beautiful showroom to tables set with glassware and dinnerware from Simon Pearce. *Fine Cooking*'s senior editor Amy Albert guided us through wine pairing as we ate the menu we had prepared, and we gave door prizes and goodie bags away, too.

After standing most of the day, though, I did feel a bit achy—it's been almost ten years since I spent my working days in a kitchen. I guess sitting behind a desk does have its advantages, but I never feel quite as energized and as connected at the end of the day as I did cooking with our readers.

And as proof that *Fine Cooking* readers are not only a friendly and energetic bunch—but also highly opinionated—read the letters at right. Seems we stirred up a little bit more than the pot when we ran the Texas chili menu in *Fine Cooking* #70.

—Susie Middleton, editor

from our  
readers

## Fired up about chili

Are you sure the cooks featured in "A Texas Chili Menu" are from Texas? No Texan would even consider canned kidney beans as an accompaniment with chili, or for much of anything else, and call the menu a bona fide Texas meal! I do compliment Paula Disbrowe and David Norman on using pure chile and spices.

—Lucy Hill, Corpus Christi, Texas

Blasphemy! As an 11th generation Texan, I'm surprised that my most recent issue of *Fine Cooking* didn't spontaneously combust as I opened it! Some of the ingredient substitutions in the Texas Beef Chili are forgivable: olive oil for vegetable oil or bacon drippings, and fresh poblanos, instead of dried. Using a non-Texas beverage is okay, but only if a Texas beer is impossible to get. However, a salad involving feta has no place on the same table as a Texas chili. And there's one item I simply can't overlook: beans. Beans?! Texas chili has not, does not, and will not ever contain beans. If you think otherwise, I'd challenge you to serve a chili with beans at a King Ranch Round-Up. If you do, be sure to have a very fast pickup truck available for a speedy getaway.

—José Solis, Houston, Texas

Just a note to thank you for the big laugh caused by your recent publishing of a "real" Texas chili recipe. Those two kids threw in so many ingredients, the only thing they missed was including two tablespoons of 5-30W motor oil!

—Luis Perez Ortega,  
Silver City, New Mexico

**Paula Disbrowe responds:** As we said in our lead sentence, "Who doesn't get worked up over a bowl of red?" Actually,



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we would have been disappointed not to get letters from equally passionate chili-loving Texans. Even if we have decided to get an unlisted phone number.

We're well aware that it's untraditional, and unorthodox, and downright dangerous to include beans anywhere near a pot of Texas-made chili. But the truth is, I like them (David is on the fence), and I've learned that others do, too. And guess where they're from?

Each December we cook for deer hunters who visit the ranch, a high percentage of whom are Texan. After making my initial mistake and serving an, um, contemporary version of chili to the ranch owner, I served a traditional pot of beef and broth. And then a funny thing happened. Camouflage-clad men sought my confidence and told me that they actually liked chili with beans or tomatoes or other untraditional garnishes like cheese and cilantro. "I just serve beans on the side," one hunter told me. It seemed a brilliant, diplomatic idea.

Regarding the beer, we vote for a Texas- or Mexico-made amber or dark beer, because we like the complexity of flavor. But as you might guess, a national food magazine needs to cast a wide net in terms of availability of ingredients.

As for the feta cheese, you have a point. But the Ruby Salad is one of our favorites, and our Texas friends love it as part of a chili menu. An aged Mexican cheese like cotija would indeed be more congruent with the meal. Again, however, it's just not widely enough available.

We realize that these explanations may not appease the die-hard. For that reason, we're proud to report that, even though we're New York City transplants, we've learned perhaps the most important rule of all: We do indeed drive a fast pickup. So we just may see you at the King Ranch Round-Up. I'll be the one drinking imported beer and wearing dark sunglasses and a big hat.

### Another point of view...

The recipes included in the Texas chili article from *Fine Cooking* #70 (p. 34)

were incredible. The chili was fabulous, and the leftovers were even better. The first time I made the chili, we shredded the leftover meat to make po' boys, taco meat, and mixed it in rice for my toddler. My 20-month-old girl loved it so much she asked for a second bowl. Since then I've made it a second time and convinced my sister to make it as well.

We have also fallen in love with the pecan bars; they are so addictive. They will definitely become a staple in our dessert menu. I shared them with a friend who "doesn't like" nuts and she asked for the recipe.

I've had to buy two issues in addition to my regular subscription to share the recipes. Thank you for a wonderful article and many incredible meals.

—Cragin Mosteller, via email

### Erratum

In Readers' Tips in *Fine Cooking* #71 (p. 34), the prize

for the winning tip was a Chef'sChoice EdgeSelect Diamond Hone Professional knife sharpener. The value of the sharpener was incorrect as printed: The item actually retails for \$149.95. We apologize for any confusion.



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*Fine Cooking* is looking to add a new member to its editorial team. Ideal candidates for the assistant editor job will have a few years of magazine editorial experience as well as a culinary school or professional cooking background. Candidates must have good writing skills and be proficient in editing recipes. They must also be willing to relocate to the Connecticut area, and to travel moderately as part of the job. Interested? Send a cover letter and your resumé to Human Resources, The Taunton Press, 63 S. Main St., Newtown, CT 06460.

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## Maria Helm Sinskey

("A Stress-Free Summer Supper," p. 38) is the former chef of San Francisco's PlumpJack Café and the author of *In the Vineyard Kitchen: Menus Inspired By The Seasons*. She now oversees the culinary programs at Napa Valley's Robert Sinskey Vineyards, which she owns with her husband.

## Tasha DeSerio

("Vibrant Vegetable Salads," p. 44) first learned to make vegetable salads at Chez Panisse Restaurant & Café, where she was a cook for five years. Now, when she's not running around after her 2-year-old son, Luke, she teaches and writes about cooking. She is also the proprietor of Berkeley, California's Olive Green Catering.

## Molly Stevens

("Seared Scallops," p. 48) opened and ran a retail seafood shop in Burlington, Vermont, where she became an expert on buying and cooking fresh sea scallops. A contributing editor to *Fine Cooking*, Molly is the author of *All About Braising: The Art of Uncomplicated Cooking*. She also wrote Williams-Sonoma's *New England* and co-wrote *One Potato, Two Potato*.

## Bruce Aidells

("Kebabs," p. 50) is the founder of the Aidells Sausage Company. Bruce is one of the country's foremost authorities on meat; his most recent book is *Bruce Aidells's Complete Book of Pork*, written with Lisa Weiss. He lives in Berkeley, California.

## Nancie McDermott

("Cool, Fresh Summer Rolls," p. 55) is a food writer and cooking teacher, specializing in the

cuisines of Southeast Asia. When we were talking with her about her forthcoming book *Quick & Easy Vietnamese* (it hits bookstores in spring 2006), Nancie told us that Vietnamese summer rolls are as easy to make as sandwiches, so we just had to have her show us how. And we're happy to report that she was telling the truth. Nancie lives with her family in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Her cookbooks include *Real Thai*, *Real Vegetarian Thai*, and *Quick & Easy Thai: 70 Everyday Recipes*.

## Tony Rosenfeld

("Saucy Chicken Wings," p. 60) first learned to grill wings on summer vacations with his family (he eventually tackled burgers, steaks, and chops). In addition to being a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking*, Tony is a part owner of b.good, a healthy fast-food restaurant in Boston, which will be opening a second restaurant this summer.

## Lori Longbotham

grew up with a strawberry patch just outside her back door, so her love of the berry runs deep. In "Strawberry Desserts," on p. 62, she shares more than enough fresh ideas to satisfy your sweet-tooth through strawberry season and beyond. Lori has been developing recipes and writing about food for 25 years. She lives in New York City, and her latest book is *Luscious Berry Desserts*.

## Eva Katz

(*Quick & Delicious*, p. 86c) is a frequent contributor to *Fine Cooking*. She has worked as a chef, caterer, teacher, recipe developer and tester, food stylist, and food writer. Eva is on the advisory board of the Cambridge School of Culinary Arts.



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READER SERVICE NO. 34



**When I roll out pizza dough, it always snaps back into a small disk and often tears. What's the trick to getting it to stretch out nicely and evenly?**

—Sarah Miles, via email

**A** Peter Reinhart responds: There are two reasons that your dough might be snapping back: The dough may be too cold, and you might also be overworking it.

The gluten network that supplies the dough's structure and strength tightens when it's chilled, which is why cold dough is harder to work with than warm dough; the gluten bonds will relax when they have a chance to rest and warm up. Gluten also tightens up when it's handled, so if you work the dough excessively, it will be difficult to stretch.

To avoid these problems, cut and shape the dough into balls before chilling, and remove them from the refrigerator at least 60 to 90 minutes before making the pizzas. (Note that dough made 12 to 24 hours ahead both tastes and performs better than younger dough.) As the dough balls come to room temperature, they will relax. When stretching the dough, be gentle and patient. Use plenty of flour on your hands and the counter to prevent sticking. Gently flatten a dough ball and then stretch it on the back of your floured hands, working the dough from the edges, not the center, as you continually rotate it with your knuckles (the center will follow on its own). You should be able to stretch the ball out into a disk about 6 to 8 inches in diameter before the dough starts to spring back. Set it aside and start on another piece, allowing the first piece to rest for two or more minutes. When you return to the first piece, it will have relaxed and you'll be able to stretch it further. Continue in this fashion until you have stretched the dough to the diameter you want.

*Peter Reinhart is a cooking instructor at Johnson & Wales University in Charlotte, North Carolina, and the author of American Pie: My Search for the Perfect Pizza.*

**Are there any guidelines about how far in advance you should uncork a bottle of wine and let it breathe?**

—Susan Wilson, via email

**A** Tim Gaiser responds: Letting wine breathe allows its temperature to rise and the wine's flavor to soften. But it's a common misconception that opening a bottle of wine and letting it sit in the bottle allows it to breathe properly. In fact, uncorking and leaving the bottle open doesn't do much of anything because there's hardly any space in a full bottle for air to get to the wine. Unless you give wine ample contact with the air, the wine will only change slowly, if at all. A more effective way to let wine breathe is either to decant it or to pour it into glasses 10 to 30 minutes before you're ready to serve it. Once glasses are poured, the wine's temperature can come up, and there's enough surface area so that the wine can aerate properly.

*Tim Gaiser, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is a master sommelier.*

**If I want to make a cake more tender, is there a way I can substitute cake flour for all-purpose flour in a recipe?**

—Annelise Evans,  
Bethesda, Maryland

**A** Flo Braker responds: Using cake flour in place of all-purpose flour can often result in a more tender cake with a finer crumb, although some cakes aren't suited to this substitution, such as pound or bundt cakes. The only way to know if your cake recipe could be improved upon with cake flour is to give it a try. If you're substituting cake flour for all-purpose flour and measuring by weight, the two flours are interchangeable. If

Have a question of general interest about cooking? Send it to Q&A, Fine Cooking, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by email to [fc@taunton.com](mailto:fc@taunton.com), and we'll find a cooking professional with the answer.

you're measuring by volume, use 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons cake flour for every 1 cup all-purpose flour in the recipe. (This is because cake flour is less dense than all-purpose flour, so you need to add more of it by volume to compensate.) Whichever way you measure, be sure to briefly whisk the cake flour first to aerate it a bit and break up any lumps. If measuring by volume, spoon the aerated flour into the measuring cup (don't tap or tamp) and sweep a metal spatula across the cup to level it off.

*Flo Braker is the author of The Simple Art of Perfect Baking, recently reissued by Chronicle Books.*

**When I make blueberry pie, there are always some tapioca granules that don't dissolve. How can I avoid this?**

—M. O'Connor, via email

**A** Abigail Johnson Dodge responds: The advantage to fruit pie or tart fillings thickened with quick-cooking or instant tapioca is that they have a bright appearance and a clean taste with no floury or starchy mouth feel or after-taste, as can happen with flour or cornstarch. The disadvantage is that, if not properly handled, quick-cooking tapioca's tiny granules can leave behind a slightly grainy, almost bead-like texture in the fruit juices. (Don't confuse this form of tapioca with pearl tapioca, which is primarily used in puddings.)

To avoid a granular texture and uneven thickening, you need to thoroughly mix the tapioca into the fruit filling, mak-

ing sure it's evenly distributed. Then set the filling aside for 15 minutes to let the granules absorb moisture from the fruit and expand properly. Also, just before scraping the filling into the crust, give it one last gentle toss. These tips will help ensure that the tapioca gets well incorporated (for even thickening) and that all the granules have plumped and swelled.

*Abigail Johnson Dodge, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is the author of The Weekend Baker.*

**Is there a special type of fresh goat cheese that crumbles? The cheese I buy sticks to my knife. The more I try to cut and separate it, the more it sticks together.**

—Charlene Griesdale, Lions Bay, British Columbia

**A** Miles Cahn responds: Your frustration is understandable. Because fresh goat cheese is more creamy than crumbly in texture, it will not literally crumble. When I come across a recipe that calls for "crumbling" goat cheese over a pasta or a salad, I simply use my fingers to separate the cheese into fragments that can be distributed evenly across the top of the dish. For the cheese that sticks to my fingers, a quick lick takes care of that.

*Miles Cahn is the owner of The Coach Dairy Goat Farm in Pine Plains, New York, which produces more than thirty varieties of fresh and aged goat's milk cheeses.* ♦

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BY REBECCA FREEDMAN



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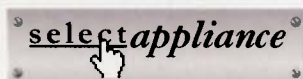
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## A stable serving block

We serve cheese and other finger food on this board because it's both pretty and practical. Pictured upside down to show off its nonslip feet, the board won't slide around on a table or countertop. *Gripperwood Gourmet cutting board*, \$19.99 at Target.

## A turner with a talent for scooping

We really thought we'd seen it all when it came to spatulas, but this turner was a revelation. An extra angled piece on one side of the turner keeps ingredients from sliding off, making it perfect for handling food on the griddle: think potato hash, fried eggs, or even cheesesteaks.

*Backstop turner*, \$24, available through Lamson & Goodnow at 800-872-6564.



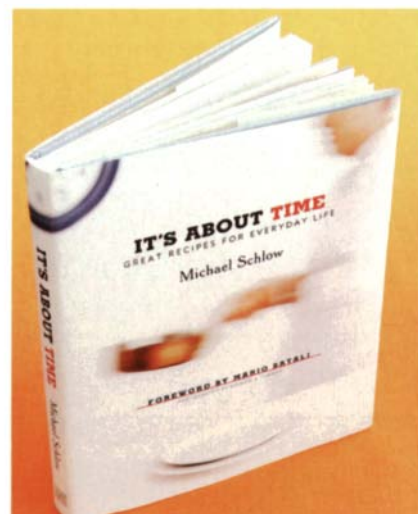
## books for cooks

### It's About Time

by Michael Schlow (*Steerforth Press*, \$35)

Chef Michael Schlow does things his own delicious way. At his three award-winning Boston restaurants, for example, he doesn't go the high-heat route; instead, he embraces slow cooking: roasting and sautéing meat at very low temperatures. And when you try the recipes for slow-roasted rib-eye steak or roasted chicken with lemon and herbs in Schlow's new book, not only will you discover the wisdom of his method, you'll also meet a great chef who has taken a decidedly different approach to writing his first cookbook.

Like many big-deal chefs before him, Schlow certainly could have created a paean to his own genius filled with luscious photos and mind-boggling haute cuisine. But he didn't. Instead, he crafted a thoroughly engaging and useful cookbook that shows



home cooks how easy great food can be. Throughout the book, Schlow stresses the importance of planning ahead and using good ingredients. He offers tools and tricks, a boatload of foolproof recipes, funny stories, and inspiring ideas, all of which gently reinforce his key point: that cooking and eating well begins with using time wisely, both when you're in a hurry and when you're not.

—Kimberly Y. Masibay,  
associate editor

## A squeeze of lime in a bottle

Stonehouse California Olive Oil Company presses limes along with olives, infusing the resulting oil with a bold citrus flavor (that's fruity without being bitter) and a fragrant, zesty scent. Try adding a few drops of this oil to guacamole or using a little in a vinaigrette for a Mexican-inspired chopped salad with corn, tomatoes, and jicama. *Stonehouse California Persian lime oil*, \$14 for 17 ounces at [Stonehouseoliveoil.com](http://Stonehouseoliveoil.com).



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### Warm Australian Lamb Salad with Sweet Potato

- 1 leg of Australian Lamb, butterflied  
salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 2 pounds sweet potatoes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons red wine or sherry vinegar
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- juice and zest of ½ orange
- 2 bunches arugula, torn
- 1 small red onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 6 ounces feta cheese, crumbled

1. Trim lamb. Season with salt and pepper.
2. Preheat oven to 375° F. Peel and dice the potatoes into ½-inch pieces and toss with the olive oil to coat. Place on a baking sheet

and cook for 20-30 minutes, or until tender.

3. Heat a barbecue or grill pan to medium-high and cook lamb for 5 minutes on each side. Cover barbecue or transfer lamb to the oven and cook for 8-10 min. or until medium rare (125-130° internal temp). Cover loosely with foil. Allow lamb to rest for 15 min.

4. While the lamb rests, whisk together vinegar, oil and juice. Season to taste. Toss warm potatoes, arugula and onion in a bowl. Add half the dressing and mix well. Slice lamb thinly across the grain and arrange over the salad. Scatter with the feta cheese and drizzle with remaining dressing.

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READER SERVICE NO. 16



Fresh, Easy and Delicious.



# Solving the Wine & Salad Puzzle

BY TIM GAISER

Salads are one of summer's great ways to make delicious meals without steaming up the kitchen much, and in this issue you'll find lots of delicious side- and main-dish salads (see "Summer Vegetable Salads," p. 44 and Quick & Delicious, p. 86c).

But what about wine? Pairing it with salad can be tricky—vinaigrette posing the main issue—but this needn't mean forgoing a glass of something good with your dinner salad. You just need to know about potential clashes to watch out for, and then learn some clever ways around them. It's actually an enjoyable—and easily solvable—challenge for a cook.

## The solutions

### Choose the right wines

❖ **HIGH-ACID SPARKLING WINES OR WHITE WINES WITH LITTLE OR NO OAK** are the best choices for most salads. The crispness or bright acidity in these wines can step up to a vinaigrette without getting knocked out of balance. Look for nonvintage sparkling wines and Champagnes as well as unoaked Sauvignon Blanc, dry Riesling, and lighter Chardonnay with little or no oak. Other dry whites such as Albariño and Pinot Grigio also work well.

❖ **YOUTHFUL, DRY ROSÉS** also work well with vinaigrettes and salads, thanks to their combination of juicy fruit and crisp acidity. Look for rosés and other blush wines made from Grenache, Pinot Noir, and Cabernet Franc.

❖ **LIGHT RED WINES WITH YOUTHFUL FRUIT, CRISP ACIDITY, MODERATE TANNINS, AND LIGHT OAK** can work with a salad containing poultry, meat, or cheeses rich in butterfat. This is because the wine's tannins and acidity marry with the protein and the fat. Try a lighter Pinot Noir, a Barbera, or a Gamay.

### Tweak the salad elements

❖ **INCLUDE POULTRY, SEAFOOD, MEAT, CHEESE, OR A COMBINATION.** The protein and the fat will buffer the acidity in the vinaigrette. They'll match nicely with the acidity in white wine and the acidity and soft tannins in red wine.

❖ **USE A Milder VINEGAR** (like rice vinegar) in the dressing to help in pairing wine with salad. The lower acidity in rice vinegar is much easier on the balance of a wine.

❖ **SUBSTITUTE FRESH CITRUS JUICE** such as orange, lemon, lime, tangerine, or grapefruit, for some or all of the vinegar in the dressing. This does wonders for wine pairing. Citric acid is a much better match for wine than acetic acid because the flavors are much closer to the flavors in wine.

❖ **THROW A SPLASH OF WINE INTO THE VINAIGRETTE.** This is also a good way to match wine and salad. I've found that this bridging results in salads that taste much better with wine.

## The challenges

### Vinegar

Most vinaigrettes contain vinegar and thus have very high levels of acidity—often far more than a typical table wine. A vinegar's sour flavor comes from acetic acid, which plays havoc with a wine's balance, making the wine taste dull and flat.

❖ **WHAT HAPPENS:** When a vinegar-based vinaigrette meets a perfectly delicious wine, the wine will taste flabby, unbalanced, and unappealing. Acetic acid flattens the fruit flavors in a wine, rendering it one-dimensional. It can also make the oak in a wine taste much too pronounced, and

this can translate to bitter flavors. Everything going on here detracts from the wine you've spent time selecting and the salad you've spent time preparing.

### Sweetness

Some vinaigrettes contain sweetness in the form of honey, added sugar, or balsamic vinegar. Ingredients like fresh or dried fruit or candied nuts also add sweetness.

❖ **WHAT HAPPENS:** When paired with a dry table wine, sweet elements clobber the wine's fruit flavors and make it taste thin, overly dry, bitter, and just plain bad.



## Slam-dunk wine matches for main-dish salads in this issue

**MOZZARELLA SALAD,**  
p. 86c: Grenache or other rosés with bright citrus and red berry flavors.

**BIBB & CILANTRO SALAD WITH SHRIMP,** p. 86c: Sauvignon Blanc, Albariño, or dry Riesling—crisp, herbal whites with bright citrus flavors.

**GRILLED LAMB SALAD,** p. 86c: Light- to medium-bodied red with forward fruit and light tannin and oak—Pinot Noir, Cru Beaujolais, or lighter Grenache blend like Côtes du Rhône.

**TUNA & WHITE BEAN SALAD,** p. 86c: Mediterranean Grenache rosés from Tavel, Bandol, or the Côtes du Rhône.

**GRILLED EGGPLANT SALAD,** p. 86c: Rosé with no oak, like one from southern France.

**GRILLED CHICKEN SALAD,** p. 86c: White wine with exotic tropical fruits, high acidity, and no oak, such as Albariño or unoaked Chardonnay.

**ASIAN STEAK SALAD,** p. 86c: Young, fruity red wine with good acidity, like Barbera.



## 10 delicious wines for salads

NV Gruet Brut, Methode Champenoise, New Mexico; \$13

2004 Villa Maria Sauvignon Blanc "Private Bin," New Zealand; \$12

2003 Nora Albariño, Rias Baixas, Spain; \$14

2002 Louis Latour Mâcon-Villages "Chameroy"; \$14

2003 Alois Lageder Pinot Grigio, Alto Adige-Südtirol, Italy; \$17

2003 Domaine de l'Hortus Pic St. Loup Rosé de Saignée; \$14

2002 Redwood Creek Pinot Noir, California; \$10

2003 Saintsbury "Garnet" Pinot Noir, Carneros; \$14

2002 Château de la Chaize Brouilly, Beaujolais; \$14

2001 Michele Chiarlo Barbera d'Asti \$14

*Tim Gaiser, a master sommelier, drinks wine and eats salad in San Francisco. He's a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. ♦*



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READER SERVICE NO. 42



# Red, Yellow, and Orange Sweet Bell Peppers

BY RUTH LIVELY



**H**igh summer is the season for sweet, crunchy bell peppers. Although they're available year-round, this is the season when these beautiful fruit (yes, they're technically fruit) are most abundant, most reasonably priced, and possibly even locally grown.

Bell peppers aren't the only variety of sweet pepper, but they're definitely the most famous (the term sweet pepper distinguishes it from the other main branch of the pepper family, the pungent chiles). And like most peppers, bells start out green before ripening to their mature color, which is most often red, yellow, or orange, although some varieties turn purple, pearl white, or chocolate brown. Green bell peppers are actually unripe, which explains their slightly bitter, less sweet flavor. They have their place in some dishes, but I tend to substitute ripe (red, yellow, or orange) bell peppers for green because I prefer their gentler flavor.

Raw or cooked, fully ripe sweet peppers are delicious, but they're perhaps at their best when roasted. The sugars caramelize, and the softened flesh makes a pleasing addition to sauces, sandwiches, pastas, and much more. Raw peppers add a wonderfully sweet crunch to salads, or you can grill, sauté, or bake peppers to equally good effect (see the sidebar at far right). As for flavor partners, sweet peppers are very adaptable, pairing nicely with almost all other summer vegetables, with most herbs, and especially with pungent foods like black olives, capers, and anchovies.



**Simple but stunning:** A platter of roasted peppers, seasoned with chopped herbs, garlic, capers, and olive oil, makes a great antipasto.

## Cooking with roasted peppers

For a pretty **antipasto**, arrange roasted peppers on a dish and sprinkle with chopped chives and parsley, minced garlic, capers, and perhaps coarsely chopped anchovies. Scatter more chopped herbs over the top and drizzle with good olive oil.

For a **sandwich** with a kick, spread a wrap with horseradish mayonnaise, top with thin slices of grilled beef or lamb, thick slices of roasted pepper, and tender romaine lettuce leaves, and roll up. For entertaining, slice the wrap crosswise into wide wheels and secure with toothpicks.

Use roasted peppers, cooked diced potatoes, sautéed mushrooms and onions, and crumbled bacon as the base for a hearty **frittata**. Top with grated cheese.

Roasted peppers make a delicious **soup**. Simmer them with chicken broth, a chopped tomato, a pinch of saffron or a spoonful of grated ginger, perhaps some grated orange zest,

and salt and pepper. Purée in a blender, adjust the seasonings, and serve at room temperature or chilled for a sweet pepper version of gazpacho.

For a rich-tasting and vibrant **pasta sauce**, purée roasted peppers with sautéed onion and garlic, and then thin the sauce with broth and a bit of cream. Toss with cooked pasta and garnish with toasted pine nuts, grated Parmigiano Reggiano, and chopped tender herbs.

Use roasted peppers to make a **romesco-style sauce**. Purée a couple of roasted peppers with a handful of toasted almonds or hazelnuts, a dried chile soaked in hot water, a few cloves of garlic, plenty of paprika, a generous pinch of cayenne, a big splash of red-wine vinegar, and enough olive oil to create a pesto-like consistency. Use as a dipping sauce for raw vegetables, as a sauce for pasta or rice, or as a garnish for grilled vegetables or meat.

## How to roast peppers

You can "roast" bell peppers in an oven, on a grill, over a gas flame, even in a fireplace, but all the methods aim for the same result: blackened skin that, once cool, peels easily away from the flesh, which has become soft and tender from the heat. My favorite method is under the broiler.

Position an oven rack to 6 to 7 inches below the broiler element and heat the broiler. Put the whole peppers on a baking sheet and broil until the skins are blistered and blackened, about 5 minutes. Turn carefully with tongs to expose an uncooked side and broil again until blackened. Repeat until the peppers are charred on all sides. Transfer them to a large bowl, cover the bowl with a dinner plate, and let the peppers steam for at least 15 to 20 minutes or until cool.

Working over the bowl to catch the juices, peel the skin off a pepper, pull out the stem and seed cluster, and separate the pepper into wide strips. Strip away any remaining seeds and trim off any white membrane. Layer the slices in a container and repeat with the remaining peppers. Strain the collected juices over the peppers. Cover and refrigerate for up to a week or freeze for several weeks.

## Fun appetizers with roasted peppers

- ❖ Make bruschetta by brushing slices of country-style bread with olive oil, grilling until golden, then rubbing with a peeled clove of garlic. Then top with...
  - ...warmed goat cheese and diced or sliced roasted pepper.
  - ...a basil leaf, roasted peppers, and a drizzle of olive oil.
  - ...tapenade or chopped sautéed mushrooms and a strip of roasted pepper.
- ❖ Use the cavity of tender inner romaine leaves or Belgian endive leaves as a cup to hold a mixture of diced red peppers, chickpeas, crumbled feta, and lemon juice. Grind on some black pepper and set a strip of roasted pepper on top.
- ❖ Roll up wide strips of roasted peppers with cubed mozzarella, basil, and prosciutto. Secure with a toothpick.



*Pretty bruschetta: Top grilled bread with warmed goat cheese, diced roasted peppers, chopped basil, and a drizzle of olive oil.*

## Four weeknight ideas for peppers

Bake a summer **gratin** with rings of sweet pepper, sliced summer squash, and sliced tomato. Season with salt, pepper, and chopped marjoram. Drizzle with olive oil and top with grated Parmigiano Reggiano and a scattering of breadcrumbs. Bake in a moderate oven until the vegetables are tender and lightly browned and the juices are bubbling.

Make a traditional **ratatouille** by sautéing chunks of red

pepper, eggplant, tomato, zucchini, and onion in olive oil. Cook gently, covered, until all the vegetables are tender and then stir in a big handful of torn or chopped basil. Finish with a squeeze of lemon juice.

For an easy and delicious **side dish**, combine slivered peppers and onions in a baking dish, drizzle with olive oil, season with salt and pepper, and tuck in several thyme sprigs. Roast until the vegetables are tender, limp, and

darkened in places. Leftovers make a great topping for pizza or focaccia or a delicious addition to an omelet or sandwich.

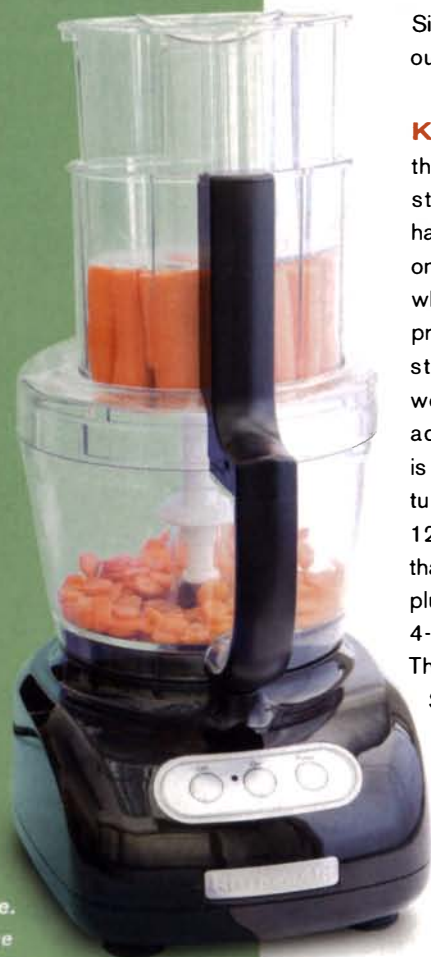
Sauté a **succotash** of diced sweet pepper, diced onion, and fresh-cut corn kernels. Season with a little ground cumin, chopped oregano, and a drizzle of lime juice. Or use the same combination of vegetables for a festive-looking salsa, with the addition of chopped avocado.

*Ruth Lively cooks, gardens, and writes in New Haven, Connecticut. ♦*



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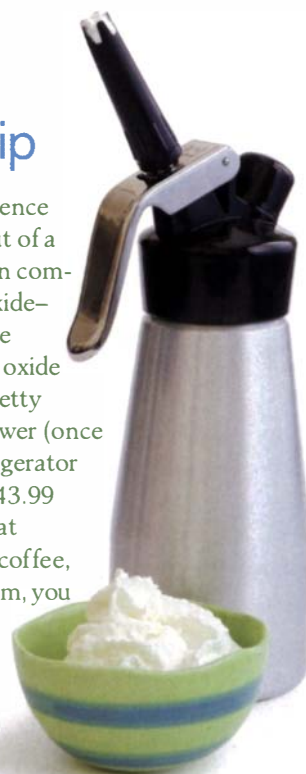


**Bigger feed tube.**  
KitchenAid's large feed tube can slice half a dozen carrots in one gulp.

## Better than Reddi-Wip

For those who are tempted by the convenience and whimsy of spraying whipped cream out of a can but who don't like the artificial flavor in commercial products, there are now nitrous-oxide-charged whipped cream dispensers. Fill the canister with heavy cream, insert a nitrous oxide charger, and your cream is whipped. It's pretty fun, it's spontaneous, and it has staying power (once "charged," the cream will hold in your refrigerator for two weeks). We like iSi's Mini Whip (\$43.99 in brushed aluminum, or \$39.99 in white, at [isi-store.com](http://isi-store.com)). You can add flavorings like coffee, cocoa, or liqueurs, but to sweeten the cream, you must use confectioners' sugar or a syrup, not granulated sugar, to avoid clogging the dispenser.

—Maryellen Driscoll, editor at large



## equipment update:

### Food processors

Since our review of food processors in *Fine Cooking* #62, two of our top brands have gotten even better.

**KitchenAid** has introduced the Ultra Wide Mouth model, a sturdy, powerful machine that has one of the largest feed tubes on the market. It can neatly slice whole onions two at a time, and produce beautiful julienne-style strips of cabbage from large wedges. For small tasks and for adding liquids while the machine is running, there's a narrower feed tube. The machine comes with a 12-cup bowl (a cup or two larger than the average food processor) plus a 10-cup bowl and a unique 4-cup mini bowl with metal blade. This machine (model KFPW760) is \$230 at [Cookswares.com](http://Cookswares.com).



**Redesigned for simplicity.**  
Cuisinart's updated model now lets you remove the lid in one step instead of two.

**Cuisinart's** Prep 11 Plus now has a redesigned lid, which fixes the shortcoming we mentioned in our previous review: that you must remove the pusher from the feed tube to lock and unlock the lid; essentially, a two-step process is now a simple one-step. If you bought this unit before the improvement, you can retrofit your machine with the newly designed bowl, cover, and lid assembly for \$74. For ordering information, see sources, p. 82.

—M. D.

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— Brad Alderson, general manager at Woodbridge Winery

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A garlic press might not be for everyone, but for those who choose this gadget over a knife to get a juicy, mince-mash of garlic, it's a welcome little tool. Look for one that doesn't take brute strength to squeeze the handles, that extrudes all the pulp, and that isn't tedious to clean. The Jumbo Garlic Press (800-81) from Messermeister (\$12 at [Gourmetcutlery.com](http://Gourmetcutlery.com)) meets all these criteria, plus it's capacious enough to hold even the largest of cloves.

—Sarah Jay, managing editor

*tip: Don't bother peeling garlic before pressing it. Just set in the unpeeled clove and squeeze. The papery skin gets left behind.*

## Wok power

**From special grates to ultra-hot burners, here are your options**

Stir-frying and other wok cooking can be done on any burner, but to do it well, the pan needs special support and a high-powered flame. Enter the wok burner. Whether you stir-fry occasionally or frequently, there's a wok burner for you. The most basic setup is a simple wok ring that sits atop a burner, converting the flat surface to one that's able to cradle a wok. From there, it gets more serious, as you'll see below. For manufacturers, see p. 82.



### Wok grate

Some manufacturers make cooktops and ranges with "integrated" or reversible wok grates. The regular grate that covers your burner inverts to cradle a wok. The advantage is that if you're prone to losing things, you don't have to worry about where you put the wok ring: just flip the existing grate over and you're ready to wok.



### High-Btu wok burner

If you love wok cooking and want the requisite firepower, you can seek out a cooktop that includes a special wok burner. This type of extra-large burner, which can offer as much as 20,000 Btu, can accommodate a wok and also serves as a superhot burner for any wide pan.



### Separate wok unit

If you're really serious about a wok on the wild side, or if you have an outdoor kitchen, you can go all out and get a drop-in wok burner. This is a separate unit, usually 24 inches wide, with a 27,500 or higher Btu burner (twice as powerful as the highest burner on most pro-style ranges). Prices are in the range of \$2,000.

—Amy Albert, senior editor



Epicurious.com called it:

“Beyond compare...satisfyingly salty but also well-rounded. There’s a pleasant hint of caramel in the flavor, and a toasty complexity that really sets it apart from the others we tried...this sauce has a nice body and very good balance of flavor.”

Did we mention it’s a soy sauce?



For great soy sauce recipes, visit [kikkoman-usa.com](http://kikkoman-usa.com).



## review: the best panini presses

BY JOANNE BOUKNIGHT

There's something irresistible about a grilled sandwich, with its crisped, golden-brown bread, gooey cheese, and warm fillings. That must be why panini—which are essentially grilled sandwiches—are popping up all over, and why panini presses have become such a hot item for home cooks.

An electric panini press is a type of contact grill, with heated bottom and top plates that cooks the food on both sides simultaneously. What makes the panini press different from other contact grills, such as waffle makers and George Foreman grills, is that the plates aren't hinged together at the back. Instead, the top plate floats above the bottom one, staying parallel (ideally) as you lower it onto the food. This lets you cook any size sandwich with even pressure and heat, whether it's a four-inch triple decker or a skinny grilled cheese. A handle provides extra leverage for pressing a tall sandwich so that ingredients bond and the sandwich compacts somewhat. Panini presses typically have ribbed plates to give the food grill marks, and in fact, many of them can "grill" more than just sandwiches (see the ideas at right). Of 11 presses, we found the three featured here to be the best. (See "How we tested" at far right.)



### Beyond the sandwich

**We tried some other suggested uses for panini presses and were mostly pleased with the results.**

**MUSHROOMS, EGGPLANT, ZUCCHINI, ONIONS, AND RED PEPPERS:** Sliced and brushed with oil, these vegetables cooked very quickly and well on all models featured here.

**STEAK, CHICKEN CUTLETS:** Cooked very quickly, but not easy to retrieve juices and browned bits for a pan sauce. Much splatter and steam, so ventilation is a must.

**BANANA AND PINEAPPLE SLICES:** Dipped in brown sugar and cooked with butter, the fruit caramelized quickly.

### In a class by itself

**Cuisinart Griddler**  
\$124 at [EverythingHome.com](http://EverythingHome.com)

**Pros:** This versatile unit operates as a traditional panini press with a center-pivot top plate, but it can also open like a book, offering two surfaces for open cooking. It's the only unit with an on/off dial (the others must be unplugged). And its removable plates—one smooth set and one ribbed—made it far and away the easiest to clean. It was the hottest of all the presses (and also had adjustable heat, 200° to 425°F), and it turned out some of the most attractive sandwiches.

**Cons:** It's nearly \$50 more than its most costly competitor. As with all the presses we tested, the top plate needs a gentle nudge to help it settle level on the sandwich.



## Runner-up

**DeLonghi Retro Panini Grill CGH800**  
\$80 at [Delonghi-products.com](http://Delonghi-products.com)

**Pros:** This panini press is handsome and solid, and its top plate settles well on tall, narrow sandwiches. The top plate has a heat-resistant leading edge, making this the only model that lets you make lid adjustments without a potholder. This press was one of the easiest to clean, thanks to its drip spout in front and widely spaced ribs. It offers adjustable heat, though we found this mostly an unnecessary feature, since “hottest” is the operative heat needed for good panini.

**Cons:** The bottom plate on our unit didn’t seem to get quite as hot as the top plate.



## Runner-up

**Villaware Propress Panini and Contact Grill**  
\$80 at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

**Pros:** This jazzy-looking model got hotter than most we tested, made the crispest, cleanest-looking grill marks, and produced delicious, attractive sandwiches and more. Like the other two models we feature here, it offers adjustable heat and a drip spout to collect fat, which is an advantage for cleaning.

**Cons:** It took close to 7 minutes to heat up, 2 minutes more than most other presses. This machine has deep, closely spaced ribs with squared edges, which are a chore to rid of grease. We also found the lock on our unit wasn’t always reliable when carrying by the handle for storing.

**How we tested:** We evaluated 11 electric presses on preheating time, speed and quality of cooking, ease of operation, and ease of cleanup. We made grilled cheese, 3½-inch tall sandwiches, and tried a variety of non-sandwich foods on those presses that promoted other uses. In addition to the models

shown here, the following were also tested: Breadman Panini Maker TR456; Breville 2-in-1 Panini Press SG630XL; Breville 2-in-1 Panini Press SG820XL; Deni Panini Maker; Flama Panini Grill; Hamilton Beach Panini Press Gourmet Sandwich Maker 25450; and Krups Universal Grill and Panini Maker FDE312-75.

*Joanne Bouknight is the author of The Kitchen Idea Book.*

## Or go low-tech



In addition to electric panini presses, we also tested the nonelectric alternative: a cast-iron pan with a foil-wrapped brick or hand-held cast-iron panini press, such as the Le Creuset one above. They work beautifully—for one sandwich at a time. If you’re making sandwiches for two or more, an electric press cooks faster, retains heat well, and reheats quickly. For sources, see p. 82.



# 10 things to do with a bench knife



*This tool is meant to cut dough, but we use it for lots more. We like a bench knife, sometimes called a dough scraper, with a ruler printed on the blade for quick measuring (for sources, see *Where to Buy It*, p. 82).*

- 1 Shuttle vegetables from cutting board to sauté pan.
- 2 Cut brownies or bar cookies neatly.
- 3 Clear the counter of sticky food or crumbs.
- 4 Score shortbread and other dough before baking.
- 5 Smash garlic cloves (using the side of the blade).
- 6 Level a cup of flour.
- 7 Make chocolate curls (pour tempered chocolate on a surface, let it harden, scrape into cigarette-like curls).
- 8 Press ganache or icing out of a pastry bag so there's no waste.
- 9 Cut soft or semisoft cheese.
- 10 Scrape burned food off baking sheets and pans.

## What is an infrared broiler?

If you've been shopping for a range lately, you may have run across a type of broiler called infrared, which has been showing up on high-end ranges for the last several years. We wondered what's so special about an infrared broiler, and how it differs from a conventional gas and electric broiler.

We found out that the term infrared is more of a marketing name than a new type of technology. An infrared broiler does employ infrared energy (and we'll explain what that means in a second), but that isn't really its distinguishing feature. What makes an infrared broiler different is that whether gas or electric, it's powered by an element that radiates a continuous sheet of heat, unlike its traditional electric and gas counterparts, which are either a snaking electric rod or a perforated pipe that shoots flame. This "sheet of heat" heats up more quickly and radiates more intense, more even heat than its conventional cousins. For cooks, that means that you can brown eight ramekins of crème brûlée at once, you can melt cheese on several crocks of French onion soup, and you can broil steak, chicken, fish, or pork and actually cook the inside of the food while getting a nicely browned crust on the outside.

But if you're still wondering what infrared energy is, here's the supershort answer. Infrared cooking just means that a solid gets hot and then radiates heat to the food. The snaking electric element you know to be a conventional electric broiler works the same way, it's just that the snaking element doesn't provide such even coverage.

—Amy Albert, senior editor





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test drive:

# An affordable mandoline that isn't scary to use

A mandoline isn't an essential kitchen tool, but for dishes that require a lot of slicing, or very consistent slices, it's faster and more exacting than a knife. It can also be more inspiring. How else can you make crinkle-cut potatoes or get paper-thin slices of cucumbers or radishes for a salad?

Until recently, the choices in mandolines have fallen into one of two extremes: those intimidating professional-style models that cost around \$175, or inexpensive, plastic slicers, often with inadequate safety guards and no legs for stability. The new Oxo Good Grips mandoline falls neatly in between, with an exceptionally smart, sturdy, and safe design and a modest price tag. An innovative dial lets you adjust the thickness of the slice from paper thin to 1/4-inch thick, as well as the slice style, which includes julienne, french-fry, crinkle, and waffle cuts. If the blade dulls or gets nicked, it's replaceable.

Tested alongside two popular inexpensive slicers, the Oxo was noticeably more consistent and versatile. For slicing vegetables with high water content, like peppers or tomatoes, it did require a little know-how in mandoline technique (see the sidebar, at right). Our one complaint: carrots got stuck when we tried to julienne them. —M. D.



## Mandoline tricks and tips

Getting the hang of using a mandoline takes some practice, but these suggestions will give you a good head start.

- ❖ Set the mandoline lengthwise in front of you so that you're pushing forward, not sideways.
- ❖ Use a sweeping motion from the top to the bottom of the "runway."
- ❖ Keep the pressure constant. Don't bear down or let up midway as the food hits the blade.
- ❖ For blades that are oriented to hit the food straight on (like Oxo's) rather than on an angle, use a gentle back-and-forth sawing motion to slice high-moisture foods that are apt to squish, compress, or collapse under pressure, such as tomatoes, citrus, kiwi, eggplant, and bell peppers.
- ❖ For thin or thick julienne, the less mass that has to pass through the blades, the less wedged in (and stuck) the food is likely to get. For example, choose small to medium potatoes for french fries.
- ❖ Very dense vegetables, such as winter squash and sweet potatoes, can be difficult to slice, especially into julienne or french-fry cuts. Use your chef's knife on these vegetables instead.
- ❖ Lightly grease the runway with cooking spray if it feels sticky.
- ❖ For round fruits or vegetables, such as potatoes, oranges, or beets, use a knife to cut off a portion to make a flat edge or, if necessary, cut in half and then slice them cut side down. ♦

### A mandoline comes in handy when making...

- |                      |   |   |
|----------------------|---|---|
| ❖ an apple tart      | ❖ julienned (match-stick) vegetables for salads or stir-fries                                   | ❖ perfect planks of zucchini for grilling |
| ❖ caramelized onions |   | ❖ onion rings                             |
| ❖ cucumber salad     |   | ❖ crinkle-cut roasted potatoes            |
| ❖ eggplant Parmesan  | ❖ paper-thin slices of carrots, cucumbers, onion, fennel, or melon for salads or hors d'oeuvres | ❖ crinkle-cut pickled vegetables          |
| ❖ french fries       |   |   |
| ❖ potato gratin      |   |   |

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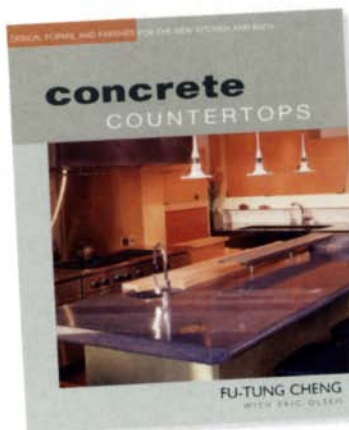


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## Winning tip

### Make a customized grill caddy

No matter how carefully I'd plan a session at the grill, I would always have to make a few trips back to the kitchen for this item or that. My solution: I bought a small plastic tool tote and stocked it with grilling staples—salt, pepper, olive oil, tongs, aluminum foil, paper towels, etc. Now when I head for the grill, the tote goes with me.

—R. B. Himes, Vienna, Ohio

### A prize for the best tip

We want your best tips—we'll pay for the ones we publish—and we'll give a prize to the cleverest tip in each issue. Write to Tips, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506 or email [fc@taunton.com](mailto:fc@taunton.com).

The prize for this issue's winner: A basket of salts, spices, brines, and organic herbs from Coastal Goods, along with a signed copy of Sarah Leah Chase's Nantucket Open-

House Cookbook; value, \$170.



### Storing a cut tomato

When I have a leftover tomato half, I poke a toothpick in the top and tent plastic wrap completely around the tomato to shut out air. Maybe I've just been lucky, but by using this method, I've had cut tomatoes last for several days at room temperature.

—Jack Hine, via email

### Carry meat on a plastic-lined serving platter

To cut back on having to tote plates and platters to the grill, I transport raw meat on a platter that I've completely covered with plastic wrap. Once the meat is on the grill, I crumple up the plastic and use the platter for serving. This prevents contamination and means fewer dishes to wash.

—Tom Schrand, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

### Use frozen water bottles for picnic ice packs

Instead of ice packs, I use frozen bottles of water to keep foods chilled when on picnics or at the beach. Once they melt, they provide cold water for drinking, too.

—Helene Stone, Highland Park, Illinois

### Lab coats make smarter aprons

A roomy lab coat covers clothing more completely and looks much smarter than a regular apron. Mine requires no ironing and was very inexpensive at a uniform store. It has roomy pockets, and you can even clip your instant-read thermometer to the breast pocket.

—Grace Logan, via e-mail



## Buy fresh herbs for less

I get tired of the high prices and low quality of fresh herbs in the grocery store. So when I find myself out of a particular fresh herb, I head to the nursery. I've found that I get a lot more out of one plant for the same price or less. Plus, the potted herbs are truly fresh, and they last longer than cut herbs.

—Andrea Reutzel, Chute, Texas



## Use pineapple cores in marinades

After I've cut all the juicy flesh from the core of a fresh pineapple, I chop up the tough core and use it, along with the juices that accumulated on the cutting board, to add flavor to marinades for chicken, pork, and beef.

—Chris Rascati, via e-mail

## An easier way to line pans with foil

Lining baking sheets and pans with foil makes clean-up easier, but getting the foil into the pan can be frustrating because the foil slips around while I'm trying to crimp it around the edges of the pan. Quite by accident, I found that if the surface of your pan is slightly wet, the foil adheres to the pan, allowing you to crimp the edges with ease.

—Bert Johnston,  
Talofofo, Guam

## Give pie dough a soft, cold pillow

My technique for rolling out pie dough is a bit unusual: Instead of chilling the dough for a long time before rolling it, I refrigerate it for just 10 minutes and then roll it between sheets of

plastic wrap. To cool the dough while rolling, I half-fill a zip-top bag with ice and water. This makes a soft, cold "pillow," which I periodically lay over the dough being rolled out. (Be sure that the outside of the bag is completely dry, of course.) I also rest my stainless-steel rolling pin on the ice pillow.

—Marie P. Affa,  
Saint James, New York

## Hull strawberries with a grapefruit knife

A serrated grapefruit knife makes an ideal tool for hulling strawberries quickly and easily.

—Lorraine Shank,  
Summit, New Jersey

## Shake on superfine sugar for the best browning

In the roast chicken recipe in *Fine Cooking* #70, you sprinkle the brined chicken with sugar and roast at high heat to get the crispiest browned skin. I got lovely, particularly even browning by using superfine sugar that I put in an old spice jar with a shaker top.

—Andrea Meyer,  
Graham, Washington

## An apple corer makes neat cucumber rings

An apple corer works great for removing cucumber seeds. I slice the cucumber in half widthwise, and then push the corer down the center of each half. Then I can slice the cucumber into rings, which I sometimes serve with a halved cherry tomato in the middle for a simple appetizer.

—Ellen Gilmore,  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana



## soaking skewers

### Save space: Soak them in a vase

Instead of soaking skewers laid flat in a baking dish, I put them upright in a tall flower vase filled with water (a tall pitcher also works). I set a saucer or small plate on top to keep the skewers from floating to the top.

—Allison Joseph,  
Quincy, Massachusetts



### Save time: Immerse them in boiling water

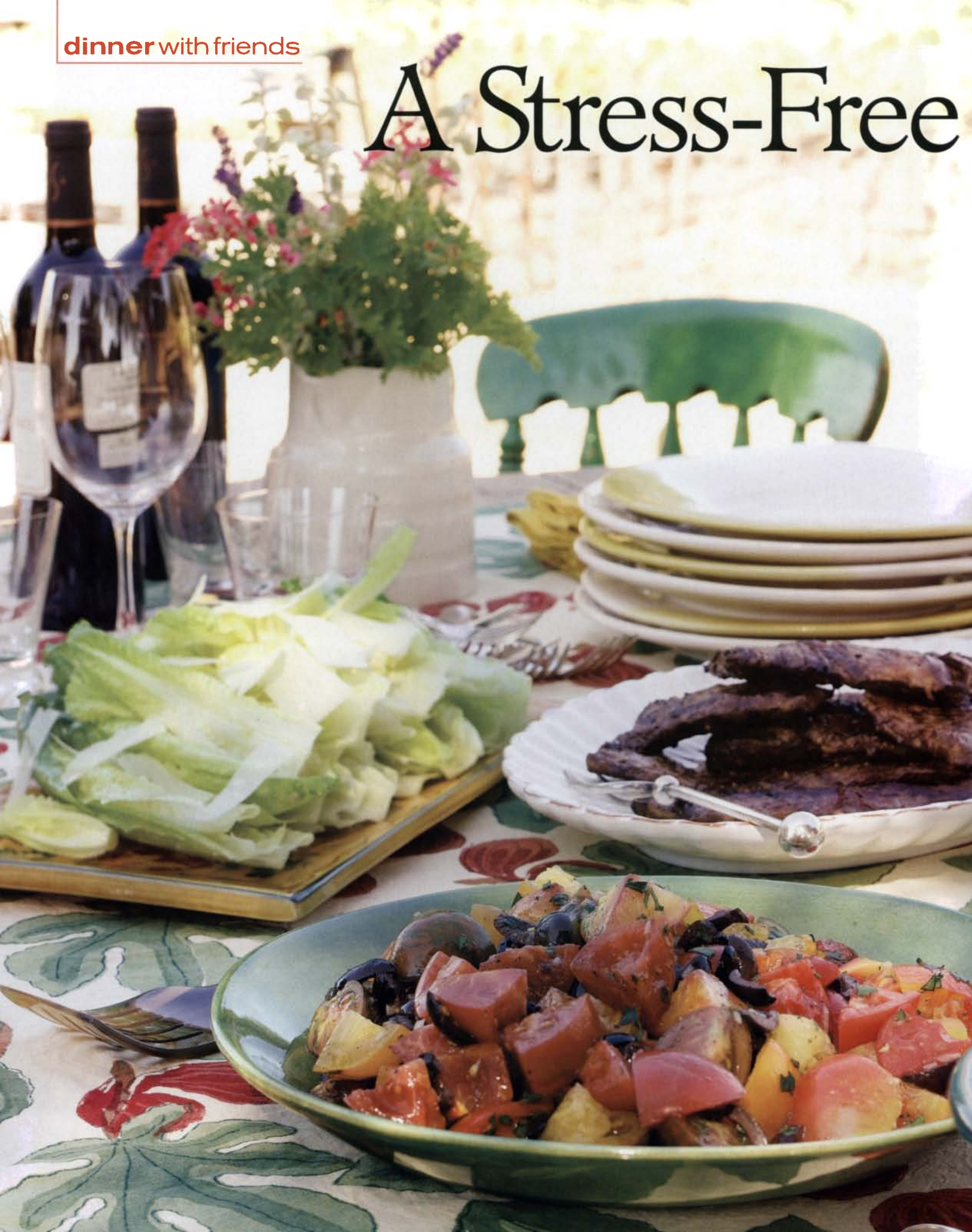
It's easy to forget to soak bamboo skewers in water for 30 minutes before grilling. When that happens, I take a shortcut: I boil them for 5 or 10 minutes in a shallow frying pan. The hot water seems to penetrate the skewers more quickly so they don't burn on the grill.

—"Chiffonade," Port Richey, Florida



dinner with friends

# A Stress-Free





# Summer Supper

Juicy grilled steak,  
fresh summer  
salads, and a homey  
berry buttermilk  
cake star in this  
easy outdoor menu

BY MARIA HELM SINSKEY

When I left the restaurant business five years ago to become the chef at our family winery, Robert Sinskey Vineyards, I left behind a kitchen full of sous chefs, prep cooks, and dishwashers. With my new staff of one—me—I dove into entertaining for both business and pleasure with relish. I assumed that my guests expected grandiose dinners from a professional, so I'd spend days preparing lavish five- and six-course meals. As my husband entertained our guests, I would run, breathless, back and forth from the kitchen to the table. By the end of the evening, as I waved goodbye to the last guest, I'd realize that I hadn't had much of a conversation with anyone, much less a bite to eat—and then I'd turn and face the dishes!

Times have changed when it comes to entertaining in our house. With two young children under my feet and a full-time career that begs for my attention, planning a summer meal takes the path of least resistance. I assemble a succession of dishes that can be prepped in advance and that don't require eagle-eyed attention, yet that still remain graceful and delicious.

Long gone are the days of fancy hors d'oeuvres. Now I turn to my

## menu

Serves six



Olive-Oil-Fried  
Almonds



Herb-Marinated  
Skirt Steaks  
with Pesto-Style  
Salsa Verde

Sun-Ripened Tomato  
& Olive Salad

Romaine Hearts with  
Lemon Vinaigrette &  
Shaved Parmesan



Berry Buttermilk  
Cake with  
Vanilla-Scented  
Crème Fraîche





trusty olive-oil-fried almonds. They can be made days in advance and store extremely well. I always have them on hand to serve for impromptu get-togethers. (I also serve them at the winery for people to nibble on during wine tastings.)

When the temperature rises and the afternoons and evenings turn balmy, I light the grill for my main course; in this case, a juicy, flavor-packed (and extremely quick-cooking) skirt steak. A simple marinade of fresh herbs and olive oil bring this rustic cut to life, and grilling it means one less pan to wash. All the prep is done ahead: Just season the steaks with salt, slap them on the grill, and breathe in the fragrant, smoke-kissed air with a glass of chilled wine in hand. Just don't let the steaks cook beyond a perfect medium rare. Top the steaks with a zesty salsa verde and serve alongside a fresh tomato and olive salad and a very simple green salad of romaine leaves with a bright lemon vinaigrette and Parmesan.

My summer desserts are always made ahead and are easy to serve because I know I'll be fat and lazy by the time I have to dole them out. This berry buttermilk cake is a dream. It tastes best baked a day in advance. The vanilla-scented crème fraîche lends the perfect contrast to the moist, berry-sweetened cake—though the cake is great without the crème fraîche, too. It's the perfect ending to a summertime meal. Enjoy the meal. Enjoy the summer.



wine choices

Maria Helm Sinskey's summer menu calls for wines with vibrant fruit and mouthwatering acidity. Dry rosé would be a good match for both the almonds and the tomato and olive salad. Look for the 2003 Mas Grand Plagniol Rosé (\$10) or the 2003 Le Galantin Bandol Rosé (\$18), both from southern France. It can also segue into the main course for those who want to stick with rosé.

If you want to serve red wine for the skirt steaks, go for a medium-bodied wine with spicy berry flavors. Pinot Noir is an excellent choice, and Maria's husband, Rob Sinskey, makes outstanding Pinot under the Robert Sinskey label. Try his 2001 Los Carneros Pinot Noir (\$30). The "J" Pinot Noir from the Russian River Valley (\$20) would also be delicious, as would the 2003 Fleur de Carneros (\$13) from California.

—Tim Gaiser, a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking*, is a master sommelier.

## Olive-Oil-Fried Almonds

*Yields 2 cups.*

The almonds and herbs are crisp, salty, and sure to whet your appetite. Canned cocktail nuts don't hold a candle to these.

**2 cups blanched almonds**  
**1 cup extra-virgin olive oil**  
**8 large fresh sage leaves**  
**2 tablespoons fresh rosemary leaves**  
**1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves**  
**1 teaspoon sea salt**

Set a metal strainer over a large heatproof bowl to quickly drain the almonds at the end of cooking. Put the almonds and olive oil in a 3- or 4-quart saucepan with a lid (the nuts and oil should fill no more than one-third of the pot). Set the pot over medium heat, stirring almost constantly until the almonds are lightly golden, 3 to 10 minutes, depending on your stove and pot. Toss in the sage, rosemary, and thyme simultaneously and cover the pot immediately with the lid to prevent the oil from spattering. Remove the pot from the heat. The herbs will make a popping sound as they cook.

After the popping dies down, remove the lid and immediately pour the almonds into the strainer. Spread the drained almonds on a rimmed baking sheet and toss with the salt. When they're thoroughly cooled, store them in an airtight plastic container at room temperature.



## Herb-Marinated Skirt Steaks

*Serves six to eight.*

For the best flavor and tenderness, cook these steaks to medium rare or just barely medium. Thinner skirt steaks will cook more quickly. If you can't grill these steaks, sear-roast them; I've given instructions for both methods. (For more on skirt steak, see p. 70.)

**4 pounds skirt steaks (about 3 or 4 steaks)**  
**12 cloves garlic**  
**4 5-inch fresh sprigs rosemary**  
**16 sprigs fresh thyme**  
**1 tablespoon freshly cracked black pepper**  
**Extra-virgin olive oil**  
**Sea salt**  
**Pesto-Style Salsa Verde (see the recipe at right)**

Trim the steaks of excess fat and cut into pieces that are of relatively even thickness and of manageable size. Smash the garlic cloves with the flat

part of a heavy knife and then peel the cloves. Crush and tear the rosemary sprigs with your hands to release their perfume. In a medium-large bowl, combine the steaks with the herbs, garlic, pepper, and 6 tablespoons olive oil. Toss to coat well. Cover and refrigerate for one to two days.

**To grill the steaks:** Take the steaks out of the refrigerator 30 minutes before grilling and brush off the herb sprigs and garlic. Prepare a medium-hot gas or charcoal grill fire. Season the steaks with salt. Oil the grill and then grill the steaks for 2 to 3 minutes on each side for medium rare (thicker steaks will be medium rare after 3 to 5 minutes per side). Let rest for 10 minutes on a clean cutting board before slicing thinly across the grain. Serve with the salsa verde.

**To sear-roast the steaks:** Heat the oven to 400°F. Put a

rack in a rimmed baking sheet or roasting pan. Let the steaks sit at room temperature for 30 minutes. Brush off the herb sprigs and garlic and season the steaks with salt. Heat a 12-inch sauté pan over high heat until very hot. Add a small amount of olive oil and as many pieces of steak as will fit without crowding (and use a splatter screen if you have one). Sear until the first side is well browned, 2 to 3 minutes. Flip and sear the other side until well browned, 2 to 3 minutes. (Reduce the heat to medium high if the pan is too hot and smoky.) Transfer the steaks to the rack on the baking sheet and continue searing the remaining steaks in batches.

When all the steaks are seared, roast them in the oven until done to your liking, 5 to 10 minutes. Let the steaks rest for 10 minutes before slicing thinly across the grain. Serve with the salsa verde.

## Pesto-Style Salsa Verde

*Yields 1 cup.*

This smooth herb sauce is more like a pesto than a traditional salsa verde. It's delicious with anything grilled: fish, shellfish, chicken, pork, beef, and even vegetables. I use red chile flakes for heat and round out that heat with freshly ground black pepper.

**¼ cup blanched almonds**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**1 cup packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves**  
**½ cup packed fresh basil leaves**  
**½ cup packed fresh cilantro leaves**  
**2 medium cloves garlic, coarsely chopped**  
**¼ teaspoon dried red chile flakes**  
**¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil**  
**1 tablespoon white-wine vinegar**

Heat the oven to 400°F. Spread the almonds in a pie pan and toast the almonds in the oven until lightly golden, about 8 minutes. Transfer to a plate and let cool.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil and salt the water heavily (it should taste like sea water). Add the parsley and basil leaves to the pot and blanch for 1 minute. Drain the leaves and immediately transfer them to a colander under cold running water or to an ice bath. When the leaves have cooled, squeeze them dry with your hands.

Put the toasted almonds, the blanched parsley and basil, the cilantro, garlic, chile flakes, ½ teaspoon salt, and a few grinds of pepper in a blender or food processor. With the machine on, gradually pour the olive oil into the feed tube and process until the mixture becomes a thick purée. The salsa verde may be made to this point a day ahead and refrigerated.

Return the salsa verde to room temperature, if chilled, and stir in the vinegar just before serving to prevent discoloration.



# timeline

Up to one week ahead

Make the almonds.

Make the crumb topping  
for the cake.

Up to two days ahead

Marinate the skirt steaks.

Slice the olives for the  
tomato and olive salad.

Toast the nuts for the salsa  
verde.

One day ahead

Make the lemon vinaigrette.

Wash the romaine.

Bake the cake.

Two hours  
before serving

Cut the tomatoes, assemble  
the tomato and olive  
salad, and keep at room  
temperature.

Make the salsa verde  
and keep at room tem-  
perature.

One hour  
before serving

Bring the lemon vinaigrette  
to room temperature.

Whip the crème fraîche.

25 to 30 minutes  
before serving

Grill the steaks.

Open the wine.

A few minutes  
before serving

Toss the romaine with  
the vinaigrette.



## Sun-Ripened Tomato & Olive Salad

*Serves six.*

Capture the flavor of ripe, just-picked tomatoes at their peak with this salad. If your tomatoes are very sweet and need more acid, adjust the flavor by adding another tablespoon of sherry vinegar.

**1 cup pitted Niçoise or Kalamata olives**

**2 pounds heirloom tomatoes (about 6), assorted colors and sizes**

**1 medium shallot, minced**  
**Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**1 tablespoon sherry vinegar**

**1 tablespoon coarsely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**

**3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**

Slice the olives into quarters. Core the tomatoes and slice them into large bite-size wedges or large cubes. Put the olives, tomatoes, and shallot in a large bowl and season with salt and pepper to taste. Add the sherry vinegar and parsley. Season again with salt and pepper to taste; then add the olive oil and toss. (The salad may be prepared up to 2 hours ahead, covered and left at room temperature. Toss again before serving.)

**Tip:** For variation, try substituting 2 tablespoons of torn basil or a mix of chopped fresh herbs for the parsley.

## Romaine Hearts with Lemon Vinaigrette & Shaved Parmesan

*Serves six.*

The tangy lemon vinaigrette in this simple salad contrasts with the cool juiciness of the lettuce and the nutty saltiness of the shaved Parmigiano.

**1 medium shallot, minced**  
**3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**  
**¼ teaspoon granulated sugar**  
**Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**3 small hearts of romaine or 3 heads of baby romaine**  
**¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil**  
**½ cup shaved Parmigiano Reggiano**

In a medium bowl, combine the shallot, lemon juice, sugar, and ½ teaspoon salt. Stir to dissolve the sugar and salt and then let the mixture sit for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, cut off the root end of the romaine so that the leaves fall loose. Wash the leaves, spin them dry, and put them in a large bowl.

Slowly whisk the olive oil into the lemon juice mixture (you should have about ½ cup vinaigrette). Season with salt, if necessary, and a few grinds of pepper. (This vinaigrette can be made ahead; just whisk to recombine it before using. If you make it more than 2 hours ahead, cover, refrigerate, and bring it to room temperature before using.)

Toss the romaine with enough vinaigrette to lightly coat. Season the salad with salt and pepper to taste. Arrange the leaves on a large platter and sprinkle with the shaved Parmigiano.



### **Berry Buttermilk Cake with Vanilla-Scented Crème Fraîche**

*Serves twelve to sixteen.*

Any leftovers make a great breakfast treat for houseguests.

**FOR THE CRUMB TOPPING:**

**2¼ ounces (½ cup) unbleached  
all-purpose flour**  
**⅓ cup firmly packed light brown  
sugar**  
**¼ teaspoon kosher salt**  
**2 ounces (¼ cup) unsalted butter,  
chilled**

**FOR THE CAKE:**

**2 cups fresh blueberries,  
raspberries, or a mix**  
**13½ ounces (3 cups) unbleached  
all-purpose flour; more for the  
pan and for the berries**  
**4 teaspoons baking powder**  
**1 teaspoon baking soda**  
**¾ teaspoon kosher salt**  
**6 ounces (¾ cup) unsalted butter,  
softened at room temperature;  
more for the pan**

**1½ cups granulated sugar**  
**3 large eggs**  
**2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract**  
**1½ cups buttermilk**

**FOR THE VANILLA CRÈME FRAÎCHE:**

**1 pound (2 cups) crème fraîche**  
**1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**  
**1 tablespoon granulated sugar**

**Make the crumb topping:** Mix the flour, brown sugar, and salt in a medium bowl. Cut the butter into chunks and add to the dry mixture. Rub the flour and butter between your fingers until the mixture just comes together and has a nice crumbly texture. (This topping can be made ahead and stored, tightly covered, in the refrigerator for up to a week.)

**Make the cake:** Rinse the berries well in a colander under running water and spread on paper towels. Let the berries air-dry for at least 15 minutes. Meanwhile, position a rack in the center of the oven and

heat the oven to 350°F. Generously butter and flour a 12-cup bundt pan. In a medium bowl, mix the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment or with a hand-held electric mixer, whip the butter and sugar together on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add the eggs one at a time, beating well for 15 seconds after each addition. Scrape the bowl, add the vanilla, and continue whipping until the mixture is light and fluffy, 1 to 2 minutes. On low speed, add the dry ingredients one-third at a time, alternating with the buttermilk ½ cup at a time. After the last addition of buttermilk, scrape the bowl, increase the speed to medium and beat for about 15 seconds to mix the batter fully.

Transfer the berries to a medium bowl and toss gently with 2 teaspoons flour. Gently fold the berries into the cake batter with a rubber spatula, to avoid crushing the berries too much. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan with the rubber spatula, level the batter, and sprinkle with the crumb topping.

Bake until a toothpick or wooden skewer comes out clean when inserted into the middle of the cake, 45 to 55 minutes. Let the cake rest for 10 minutes before turning it out onto a rack. Flip the cake back over so that the crumb topping is upright. Let cool completely and wrap tightly. Store at room temperature overnight before slicing.

**Make the vanilla crème fraîche:**

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment or with a hand-held electric mixer, whip the crème fraîche, vanilla extract, and sugar until soft peaks form, about 2 minutes. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use.

**To serve:** Slice the cake and serve each slice with a dollop of the crème fraîche.

**tip:** For the best flavor, make both this deliciously moist, berry buttermilk bundt cake and its crème fraîche topping one day in advance.



# The 4 Elements of Vibrant Vegetable Salads

BY TASHA DESERIO

**S**imple garden salads are always welcome on my table, but in the summer, I crave salads with bright, colorful vegetables like corn, squash, peppers, green beans, and tomatoes. The key to these salads is to use vegetables that need little or no cooking, and to cut vegetables on a sharp diagonal or into thin matchsticks—there's something about a nice, long cut that makes almost any vegetable look elegant. Add lots of herbs and a tangy, garlicky vinaigrette, and you'll get a fresh, substantial side dish with a lively, seasonal feel that feels much lighter than a pasta or potato salad.



**Vegetables that need little or no cooking** are the best choice for summer salads. They should be firm and crisp, with nice taut skin. Use avocados and tomatoes while they're ripe but still firm.



**Generous amounts of fresh herbs** are major flavor elements of these salads, not just a sprinkle for color. Use herbs while they're fresh and perky. Treat them gently and use a sharp knife when chopping them or the leaves will bruise and turn black.







## Green Bean Salad with Corn, Cherry Tomatoes & Basil

*Serves six to eight.*

If you can't find ripe, juicy cherry tomatoes, substitute small wedges of ripe beefsteak tomatoes.

**3 cups fresh corn kernels (3 to 4 ears)**

**Kosher salt**

**1 pound fresh green beans, trimmed and cut in half diagonally**

**1 small red onion, cut in half through the root end, root trimmed, and cut lengthwise into very thin slices**

**1 clove garlic**

**¼ cup red-wine vinegar; more to taste**

**⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil**

**1 pint cherry tomatoes, cut in half**

**1 cup roughly chopped fresh basil**

**Freshly ground black pepper**



## Garlic cloves mashed to a paste

add a tasty kick. I use a large granite mortar and pestle to pound the cloves to a paste, but you can also use the flat part of a chef's knife to mash the garlic. A pinch of kosher salt helps the process along.



## Vinaigrettes with a bright edge

tie the salad together. To stand up to vegetables—especially raw vegetables—your vinaigrette should be relatively assertive, and that means using a bright acid. Try combining fresh citrus juices and different vinegars.

Bring a medium pot of water to a boil. Add the corn kernels and blanch for 1 minute. Scoop out the corn with a strainer; set aside. Season the water with a generous amount of salt, let it return to a boil, add the beans, and cook until just tender, about 3 minutes. Drain the beans and spread them on a baking sheet to cool.

Meanwhile, put the onion in a small bowl filled with ice water. (which will crisp it and mellow its flavor.) Using a mortar and pestle or the flat side of a chef's knife, mash the garlic to a paste with a pinch of salt. Put the paste in a small bowl (or keep it in the mortar) and whisk in the vinegar. Let sit for 5 to 10 minutes and then whisk in the olive oil.

Just before serving, drain the onions. Put the beans, corn, onions, cherry tomatoes, and basil in a large bowl. Season with salt and pepper and toss with the vinaigrette. Taste again and add more salt, pepper, or vinegar if needed. Serve right away.



**Do-ahead tips:** To keep these salads looking fresh, toss them with the vinaigrette just before serving. But you can prep the vegetables ahead (except avocados) and refrigerate them. Cover raw vegetables and picked herbs with a damp paper towel; put cooked vegetables in an airtight container so they don't absorb other flavors. The vinaigrettes can be held at room temperature for up to 2 hours, or refrigerated for longer.

### Summer Squash Salad with Lemon, Capers & Parmesan

*Serves six to eight.*

Try adding other garden herbs like marjoram or basil, if you'd like.

1 clove garlic  
Kosher salt  
¼ cup fresh lemon juice  
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil  
1 pound summer squash (yellow squash, zucchini, or a mix)  
Freshly ground black pepper  
4 cups loosely packed baby arugula  
½ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves  
½ cup chopped chives, cut into ½-inch lengths

**2 tablespoons capers, rinsed well**  
**1 ounce (¼ cup) finely grated Parmigiano Reggiano; plus a chunk to shave for garnish**

In mortar or using the flat side of a chef's knife, mash the garlic to a paste with a pinch of salt. Put the paste in a small bowl (or keep it in the mortar) and whisk in the lemon juice. Let sit for 5 to 10 minutes and then whisk in the olive oil.

Using a mandoline (for handling tips, see p. 34) or a sharp chef's knife, cut the squash diagonally into very thin (⅛- to ⅜-inch) ovals. Put the squash in a medium bowl, season with salt and pepper, and gently toss with about two-thirds of the vinaigrette.

Combine the arugula, parsley, chives, and capers in a separate bowl, season with salt and pepper, and toss with just enough vinaigrette to lightly coat. Taste both the squash and herbs and adjust the seasoning with salt or pepper if necessary. Layer about a third of the squash in a shallow bowl or platter, scatter about a third of the arugula mixture on top, and sprinkle with a third of the grated Parmesan. Repeat the process with the remaining squash and arugula mixture, sprinkling each layer with grated Parmesan. For garnish, use a vegetable peeler to shave long strips from the chunk of Parmesan onto the salad. Serve immediately.

### Jicama, Avocado, Radish & Orange Salad with Cilantro

*Serves six to eight.*

4 oranges  
1 teaspoon cumin seeds  
1 clove garlic  
Kosher salt  
5 tablespoons fresh lime juice; more to taste  
Large pinch cayenne  
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil  
1 small jicama (about 1½ pounds)  
8 small red radishes, cut into very thin round slices  
5 scallions, dark green tops trimmed; cut diagonally into thin slices  
Freshly ground black pepper  
2 large ripe but firm avocados  
1 cup packed fresh cilantro leaves

Finely grate 2 teaspoons zest from the oranges and set the zest aside. With a sharp paring knife, slice the ends off the oranges. Stand each orange on one of its cut ends and pare off the rest of the peel in strips, making sure to remove all of the pith. Working over a small bowl, carefully cut the orange segments away from the connective membrane. Squeeze the membranes over the bowl to get any remaining juice.

Put the cumin seeds in a small, dry skillet and toast over medium heat until slightly browned and aromatic, about 1 minute. Remove from the skillet and let cool. Grind the seeds to a fine powder in a mortar and pestle or an electric spice mill.

### wine choices

For ideas about wines to pair with these salads, see *Enjoying Wine* on p. 22.





Using a mortar and pestle or the flat side of a chef's knife, mash the garlic to a paste with a pinch of salt. Put the garlic paste and cumin powder in a small bowl (or keep it in the mortar) and whisk in the 2 teaspoons orange zest, 3 tablespoons orange juice (from the bowl of orange segments), the lime juice, and the cayenne. Let the mixture sit for 5 to 10 minutes, and then whisk in the olive oil.

Meanwhile, peel the jicama and cut into 1/8-inch-thick matchsticks 2 to 3 inches long. In a large bowl, combine the jicama, radishes, and scallions. Season with salt and pepper and toss with about two-thirds of the vinaigrette. Set aside for 5 to 10 minutes to let the flavors mingle.

Just before serving, thinly slice the avocados diagonally (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 74). Lay half of the avocado slices in a shallow bowl and season with salt and pepper. Drizzle some of the remaining vinaigrette on the avocado. Add the cilantro and orange segments to the bowl of jicama and toss gently. Taste and adjust the seasoning with more salt, pepper, and lime juice if needed. Put the jicama salad on top of the sliced avocado and tuck the remaining slices of avocado into the salad. Season the top slices with salt and drizzle with the remaining vinaigrette. Serve immediately.

### Slivered Red Pepper, Carrot & Snap Pea Salad

*Serves six to eight.*

- 1 red bell pepper
- 2 medium carrots, peeled
- 1/2 pound snap peas, trimmed
- 4 scallions (white and light green parts only), trimmed
- 1 fresh jalapeño
- 1 clove garlic
- Kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice; more to taste
- 1 tablespoon Champagne (or white-wine) vinegar
- 1 teaspoon granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro leaves, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 cup small fresh basil leaves
- 1/4 cup small fresh mint leaves

Halve and seed the red pepper. Cut the pepper halves in half lengthwise, and cut each quarter diagonally into very thin slices. Cut the carrots into thin matchsticks about 3 inches long. Cut the snap peas diagonally into 3/4-inch pieces. Slice the scallions thinly on the diagonal. Halve and seed the jalapeño; cut the halves diagonally into thin slices. Combine the red pepper, carrots, snap peas, scallions, and jalapeño in a large bowl.

To make the vinaigrette, mash the garlic and a pinch of salt to a smooth paste with a mortar and pestle or with the flat side of a chef's knife. Combine the garlic, ginger, lime juice, vinegar, and sugar in a small bowl (or in the mortar) and whisk to combine. Let the mixture sit for 5 to 10 minutes and then whisk in the olive oil. Add about half of

the vinaigrette to the vegetables, toss well, and let sit for 15 to 20 minutes.

Just before serving, add the parsley, cilantro, basil, and mint to the vegetables and season with salt. Drizzle in the remaining vinaigrette and toss well. Taste the salad and season with more salt or lime juice if necessary. Serve immediately.

**Serving suggestion:** To make this into a light meal, add grilled shrimp or squid or thinly sliced grilled chicken or beef.

*Tasha DeSerio, the proprietor of Olive Green Catering in Berkeley, California, teaches and writes about cooking. ♦*





BY MOLLY STEVENS

# Perfectly Seared Scallops

Dry thoroughly, cook briefly,  
and sauce simply to enjoy  
their subtly sweet richness

**T**here are few main courses as elegant and yet as simple as a dish of seared sea scallops. Sweet, tender, mild, and delectable—the less you fuss with scallops, the better they taste. The best way I've found to cook plump, meaty scallops is to sear them quickly in a hot pan so that the outsides get a lovely crisp, brown crust and the insides remain tender and creamy. Then, to dress them up, I whip up a speedy pan sauce in the same pan.

Getting a great sear isn't hard if you keep these points in mind.

**Dry scallops are essential.** At the store, ask for dry sea scallops, which means that they haven't been soaked in a sodium solution. The solution whitens and plumps the scallops, but when you cook them, all that liquid leaches out, making it impossible to achieve a good sear.

**Get the pan and cooking fat hot.** Heat a nonstick pan over medium-high heat for a minute or so; then add the fat and

let it heat up. If you're using oil, it's ready when a drop of liquid sizzles as it hits the hot oil. If you're using oil and butter, wait until the butter stops foaming.

**Don't crowd the pan.** There should be enough room between the scallops so that they sizzle rather than steam—that's the only way you'll get a good crust. If your pan isn't big enough to hold the scallops without crowding, sear them in batches.

Scallops only need a few minutes per side to get nicely

browned. They're done when they feel barely firm to the touch, and when you cut into one, it should be faintly opalescent. Don't overcook them or they'll be dry and rubbery.

After transferring the seared scallops to a platter, make a quick pan sauce. I offer three choices at right, but the options are limitless. The idea is to choose just a handful of ingredients that complement one another to make a lively sauce for your perfectly seared scallops.



## Seared Scallops

*Serves two to three.*

**1 pound dry large sea scallops**

**Ingredients for 1 sauce recipe, at right**

**2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, peanut oil,  
or a mix of oil and unsalted butter (see the  
sauce recipe for recommendations)**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

Prepare the scallops as described in the photo below. Prepare the ingredients for the sauce. Heat a 10- or 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat for 1 to 2 minutes. Add the oil and butter, if using, and heat until quite hot. Pat the scallops dry once more and put them in the pan in a single, uncrowded layer. Season with salt and pepper and let sear undisturbed until one side is browned and crisp, 2 to 4 minutes. Using tongs, turn the scallops and sear until the second side is well browned and the scallops are almost firm to the touch, 2 to 4 minutes. Take the pan off the heat, transfer the scallops to a plate, and set them in a warm spot. Let the pan cool for a minute before you make the sauce.

## Dry the scallops well to ensure a golden crust



**Prep tips:** If you feel any grit on the scallops, rinse them under cold water. Remove patches of tough muscle from the sides. Pat the scallops dry with paper towels; surface moisture impedes browning.



**Cooking tips:** For a deeply golden sear, use medium-high heat and don't crowd the pan. To avoid tearing the scallops while turning them, use a nonstick skillet and handle them gently.

# Three quick pan sauces

## Classic Herb Butter Sauce

*Yields enough for 1 pound seared scallops.*

This French pan sauce works well with parsley and chives, but other good candidates are tarragon, chervil, dill, and basil.

**3 tablespoons unsalted butter,  
cut into six pieces**

**2 tablespoons finely diced shallot  
(1 medium shallot)**

**¼ cup dry white vermouth or dry  
white wine**

**¼ cup finely chopped mixed fresh herbs,  
such as flat-leaf parsley and chives**

**¼ teaspoon finely grated lemon zest**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground  
black pepper**

**2 to 3 lemon wedges for serving**

Follow the recipe at left, using 1 tablespoon each extra-virgin olive oil and unsalted butter to sear the scallops.

When the scallops have been transferred to a plate and the pan has cooled somewhat, return the pan to medium heat. Add a piece of the butter (½ tablespoon) and the shallots and sauté until the shallots begin to soften, about 1 minute. Add the vermouth or wine and simmer until reduced by about half, another 1 to 2 minutes. Add the herbs and lemon zest. Reduce the heat to low, add the remaining butter, and whisk constantly until the butter melts into the sauce. Return the scallops and any accumulated juices to the pan. Gently roll the scallops in the sauce to warm them through. Taste for salt and pepper and serve immediately with lemon wedges on the side to squeeze over the scallops.

## Spicy Coconut Curry Sauce

*Yields enough for 1 pound seared scallops.*

**1 tablespoon peanut or extra-virgin  
olive oil**

**⅓ cup thinly sliced white onion**

**1 medium carrot, peeled, cut in half  
lengthwise, and thinly sliced into  
half-moons**

**1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger**

**1 teaspoon Thai-style red curry paste  
(for more information, see p. 72)**

**⅔ cup canned coconut milk**

**2 tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh  
mint, basil, or cilantro, or a mix**

**1 tablespoon fresh lime juice**

**Kosher salt**

Follow the recipe at far left, using 2 tablespoons peanut or extra-virgin olive oil to sear the scallops.

Once the scallops have been transferred to a plate and the pan has cooled somewhat, return the pan to medium heat. Add the oil, onion, carrot, and ginger, and sauté until the onion begins to soften, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in the curry paste. Add the coconut milk and simmer, stirring, until smooth, about 2 minutes. Add the herbs and lime juice. Reduce the heat to low and return the scallops and any accumulated juices to the pan. Gently roll the scallops around to coat them in the sauce and warm them through. Taste for salt and serve immediately.

## Spicy Red Pepper & Cilantro Sauce

*Yields enough for 1 pound seared scallops.*

This is not so much a sauce as a flavorful coating; you'll have just enough liquid to moisten the scallops as you roll them around in the pan.

**2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**

**1 tablespoon minced garlic (2 cloves)**

**1 fresh serrano chile or small jalapeño,  
cored, seeded, and minced**

**½ small red bell pepper, finely diced  
(about ⅓ cup)**

**1 tablespoon fresh lime juice**

**2 heaping tablespoons coarsely  
chopped cilantro**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground  
black pepper**

Follow the recipe at far left, using 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil to sear the scallops.

Once the scallops have been transferred to a plate and the pan has cooled somewhat, return the pan to medium heat. Add the oil, garlic, and chile and sauté until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the bell pepper and sauté, stirring often, until the pepper is barely soft, about 1 minute. Add the lime juice and simmer to reduce slightly, 30 to 60 seconds. Stir in the cilantro. Reduce the heat to low and return the scallops and any accumulated juices to the pan. Gently roll the scallops around to coat them in the sauce and to warm them through. Taste for salt and pepper and serve immediately.



# Kebabs

## Juke up the Flavor

**Marinades, basting sauces, and dipping sauces pack on flavor**

BY BRUCE AIDELLS

**T**here's a good reason why kebabs have found their way into so many cuisines around the world. These succulent skewers of bite-size food can be the entrée or a first course. You can serve just one kind, or grill an assortment. Kebabs are quick to cook, easy to eat, and they lend themselves to a zippy array of flavorings, including marinades, spice pastes, dry rubs, basting sauces, and dipping sauces.

**For the most flavor, try a two-fold approach: a marinade or grilling sauce and a finishing sauce.** A marinade or grilling sauce will get things started by letting the flavors penetrate the meat or fish. A marinade works as a basting sauce during grilling, too, to give you a nicely browned exterior that will especially help flavor vegetables. For a final rush of flavor, I like to make a dipping sauce for dunking each tasty morsel.

**Be consistent with size.** Pay attention to the recipe and cut your kebab ingredients the same size. Small cubes of meat tend to dry out, while large

chunks take too long for the center to cook before the outside gets too charred.

In the pork and chicken recipes, I put ingredients like onions and peppers on the same skewers as the meat, because the vegetables in question are longer cooking and take

### RECIPES

#### Spicy Thai Shrimp Kebabs

#### Lemony Moroccan-Style Chicken Kebabs

#### Spicy-Smoky Mexican Pork Kebabs

about the same time to cook through as the meat. But for the shrimp and eggplant, which will cook at different rates, I use separate skewers.

**Invest in sturdy metal skewers.** I prefer these to disposable wooden ones. The best metal skewers are flat, or if rounded, double-pronged, so the food doesn't slip and twirl when you turn

the skewers (for sources, see p. 82). If you do use wooden skewers, go for flat ones (see p. 82), soak them first to keep the exposed ends from burning (they usually do anyway), and use two parallel skewers to keep the food from spinning.

**Cook over a medium-hot fire, not a super-hot one.** I prefer a medium-high fire to a really hot one because the small chunks of food on a kebab can char easily. Also, when you're using a marinade for basting, hold back from doing so in the last 5 minutes of cooking. This reduces the risk of cross-contamination.

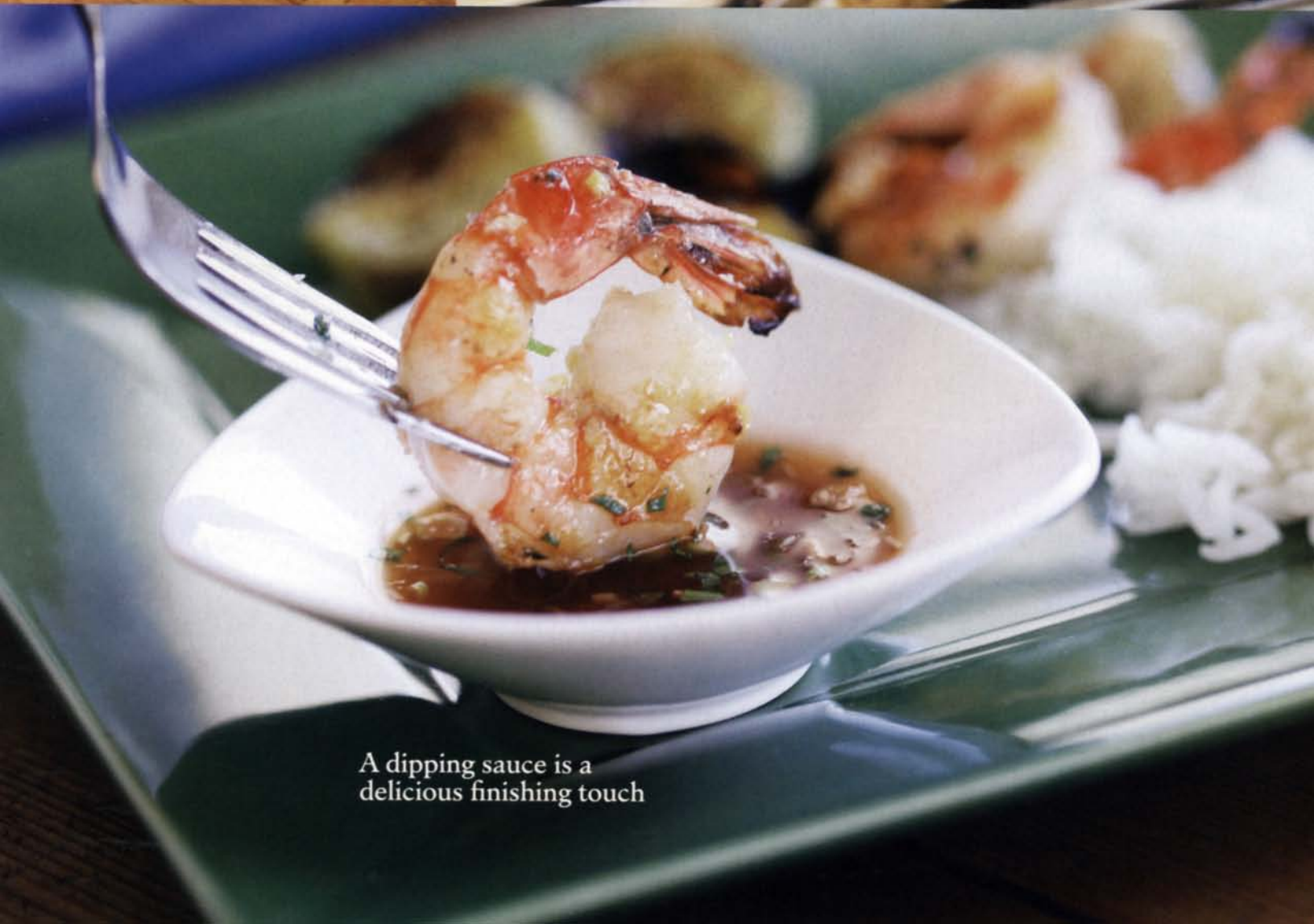
**One last word on serving:** While it seems like a cool idea and a dramatic presentation to give each guest his own individual skewer, wrestling with a skewer can be pretty awkward for most people. So, just grab the end of the skewer with a towel or hot mitt, use your tongs to slide the ingredients onto a warm serving platter, and tent with foil. That way all the components get combined and your guests can take as little or as much as they like.



Marinating gives kebabs  
an initial boost



Basting adds  
another layer of  
flavor



A dipping sauce is a  
delicious finishing touch





Lemongrass, lime, ginger, and chiles give shrimp kebabs a Thai twist.

If the called-for ingredients cook at widely different rates, **separate them** and cook them on different skewers.

### Spicy Thai Shrimp Kebabs with Chile-Lemongrass Dipping Sauce

*Serves four.*

Because shrimp cooks so quickly, it's the lone element on the skewer. Tender Japanese or Chinese eggplant, also grilled on its own skewers, is the perfect accompaniment.

#### FOR THE GRILLING SAUCE:

- 1 tablespoon chopped garlic**
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh ginger**
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh jalapeño**
- 1 tablespoon chopped scallion (green part only; save the white part for the dipping sauce)**
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt**
- ¼ cup peanut oil**

#### FOR THE DIPPING SAUCE:

- 3 stalks lemongrass, ends trimmed, tough outer leaves removed, tender white core finely chopped (to yield about 3 tablespoons)**
- 3 tablespoons fresh lime juice**
- 2 tablespoons finely sliced scallion (white parts only), from about 3 large scallions**
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce**
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro**
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil**
- 1½ teaspoons soy sauce**
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic**
- 1 teaspoon light brown sugar**
- 2 teaspoons Sriracha chile sauce; more to taste**

#### FOR THE KEBABS:

- 1½ pounds large shrimp (21-25 count), peeled and deveined**
- 4 Japanese or Chinese eggplant, peeled and cut into ¾-inch rounds**

**Make the grilling sauce:** In a food processor, combine the garlic, ginger, jalapeño, scallion, salt, and peanut oil and process until well combined; the mixture will still be chunky. (The grilling sauce can be made up to 6 hours ahead and refrigerated).

**Make the dipping sauce:** In a small serving bowl, combine all ingredients and 3 tablespoons water; stir well. (The dipping sauce can be made up to 6 hours ahead and refrigerated).

**Prepare the skewers:** Thread the shrimp onto flat skewers or onto parallel skewers so the skewers are perpendicular to the length of the shrimp. (The double skewers should help to keep the shrimp from spinning when you turn the kebabs on the grill.)

Thread the eggplant pieces onto skewers so that the skewer is parallel to the cut surface of the eggplant. (Use two parallel skewers to prevent the eggplant slices from twirling when you turn them).

**Grill the skewers:** Build a medium-hot charcoal fire or heat a gas grill to medium high. Oil the grill grate. Brush the grilling sauce all over the shrimp and eggplant skewers. Grill the shrimp skewers (uncovered on a charcoal grill; covered on a gas grill) until just cooked through, about 2 minutes per side. Grill the eggplant skewers until soft and nicely browned, 2 to 4 minutes per side. If they begin to burn before softening, transfer them to a cooler part of the grill (if using gas, lower the heat a bit).

Remove the shrimp and eggplant from the skewers and arrange on a platter. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons of the dipping sauce and serve with the remaining dipping sauce on the side. (For the sauce, use one communal bowl or individual condiment bowls).



## Lemony Moroccan-Style Chicken Kebabs

Serves six.

Microwaving the lemons is a quick method for giving them the flavor of preserved lemons.

### FOR THE MARINADE:

**2 lemons**  
**6 cloves garlic, peeled**  
**2 ½-inch-thick slices peeled fresh ginger**  
**1 teaspoon dried marjoram**  
**1 teaspoon ground coriander**  
**1 teaspoon ground cumin**  
**½ teaspoon ground turmeric**  
**⅛ teaspoon ground cinnamon**  
**Pinch saffron threads**  
**1 teaspoon light brown sugar**  
**2½ teaspoons kosher salt**  
**2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper**  
**3 tablespoons olive oil**

### FOR THE KEBABS:

**2½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed of excess fat and cut into 2-inch chunks**  
**1 sweet onion (like Vidalia), cut into 1-inch pieces**  
**1 red bell pepper, cut into 1-inch squares**  
**1 yellow bell pepper, cut into 1-inch squares**  
**2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley for garnish**

### FOR THE YOGURT-LEMON SAUCE:

**1 seedless cucumber, cut into ½-inch dice**  
**½ cup chopped fresh cilantro**  
**2 cups plain whole-milk yogurt**  
**Kosher salt**

**Make the marinade:** Cut four deep, lengthwise gashes, equally spaced, into each lemon. Put the lemons and garlic cloves in a small microwavable container. Cover and microwave on high until the lemons are soft and juice has exuded from them, about 4 minutes (If not soft, continue to microwave in 30-second intervals). Strain the juice into a small container and let the lemons and garlic cool briefly. When the lemons are cool enough to handle, separate them into sections. Scrape the pulp and most of the white pith away with a spoon; discard. Put the scraped lemon peels, garlic, lemon juice, and remaining marinade ingredients in a blender and purée to make a coarse, soft paste. Set 2 tablespoons aside to use for the yogurt sauce.

**Marinate the chicken:** Put the chicken into a 1-gallon zip-top bag; scrape in the remaining marinade. Massage the bag to coat all the chicken pieces and marinate for 1 to 2 hours in the refrigerator.

**Grill the kebabs:** Build a medium-hot charcoal fire or heat a gas grill to medium high.

Dump the chicken into a bowl, but don't scrape off any excess marinade. Put the onion and peppers in the marinade bag and massage them to coat with the marinade (it's fine if the onion pieces break apart). Transfer to another bowl. Thread the chicken onto skewers, positioning a piece of onion and pepper between the pieces of chicken. If there's extra pepper or onion, thread them onto separate skewers, if you like.

When ready to grill, oil the grill grate. Grill the kebabs over direct heat (uncovered for charcoal; covered for gas), turning the skewers every 2 to 3 minutes until the chicken is firm and shows no redness when cut into, about 10 to 15 minutes. Check several pieces of chicken to be sure.

**Make the sauce:** Combine the reserved 2 tablespoons marinade with the cucumber, cilantro, yogurt, and 2 teaspoons salt. Mix well. (Make the sauce no more than an hour before serving or it will be too watery).

**To serve:** Remove the chicken and vegetables from the skewers and serve them in a mound with the yogurt sauce on the side.



Flat or double-pronged skewers keep food from spinning when you turn them.



A bed of couscous is the perfect landing for lemony chicken kebabs.





### Grill butternut squash to serve on the side

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Peel a medium butternut squash and scoop out the seeds; cut into 1-inch pieces. Boil the squash until tender but still firm, about 10 minutes. Drain and cool under cold water. Toss the squash with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Thread the squash onto skewers and set aside. After you've grilled the meat, grill the squash skewers, basting with the reserved marinade, until browned and tender, 5 to 7 minutes.



Tortillas, queso fresco, black beans, and grilled scallions make pork kebabs a meal.

### Spicy-Smoky Mexican Pork Kebabs

*Serves six.*

I sometimes serve these kebabs with grilled butternut squash (at left) though the spicy pork and poblano combination also makes a natural filling for warm tortillas.

#### FOR THE MARINADE:

- 1 dried hot red chile, stemmed and seeded**
- 1 tablespoon grated lime zest**
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice**
- ½ cup diced yellow onion**
- ½ cup fresh orange juice**
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro**
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano**
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin**
- 1 teaspoon light brown sugar**
- 1 tablespoon chopped canned chipotle in adobo (I like Herdez brand)**
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic**
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt**
- ¼ cup vegetable oil**

#### FOR THE KEBABS:

- 2 pork tenderloins (1 to 1½ pounds each), trimmed, halved lengthwise, and sliced into 1½-inch-thick half-rounds**
- 1 red onion, cut into 1-inch pieces**
- 2 fresh poblano chiles, cored, seeded, and cut into 1-inch squares**
- 16 medium radishes, trimmed**
- 16 scallions, root ends trimmed**
- ¼ cup vegetable oil**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**Make the marinade:** Soak the red chile in very hot water to cover until softened, about 15 minutes. Drain the chile and put it in a blender, along with all the remaining marinade ingredients. Blend until smooth. Set aside ½ cup of the marinade for basting. Put the remaining marinade and the pork in a large zip-top bag, seal, and massage the contents to coat. Marinate for 1 to 2 hours in the refrigerator. Remove the pork; discard the marinade.

**Make the kebabs:** Thread the meat onto skewers, alternating with the onion, the poblano pieces, and the whole radishes.

Build a medium-hot charcoal fire or heat a gas grill to medium high and oil the grill grate. Grill the kebabs (uncovered for charcoal; covered for gas), turning every 2 to 3 minutes. Once the pork loses its raw look, baste with the reserved marinade each time you turn the skewers. Grill until the pork is firm to the touch and the edges have begun to brown and the vegetables have begun to color and soften, about 15 minutes. Mound the skewers on a warm platter; tent with foil to keep warm. Brush the scallions with oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Grill until they begin to brown and soften, turning frequently, 3 to 5 minutes.

**To serve:** Remove the meat and vegetables from their skewers, mound them on the platter and arrange the scallions around the edges.

*Bruce Aidell's latest book is Bruce Aidell's Complete Book of Pork.* ♦

# Cool, Fresh Summer Rolls

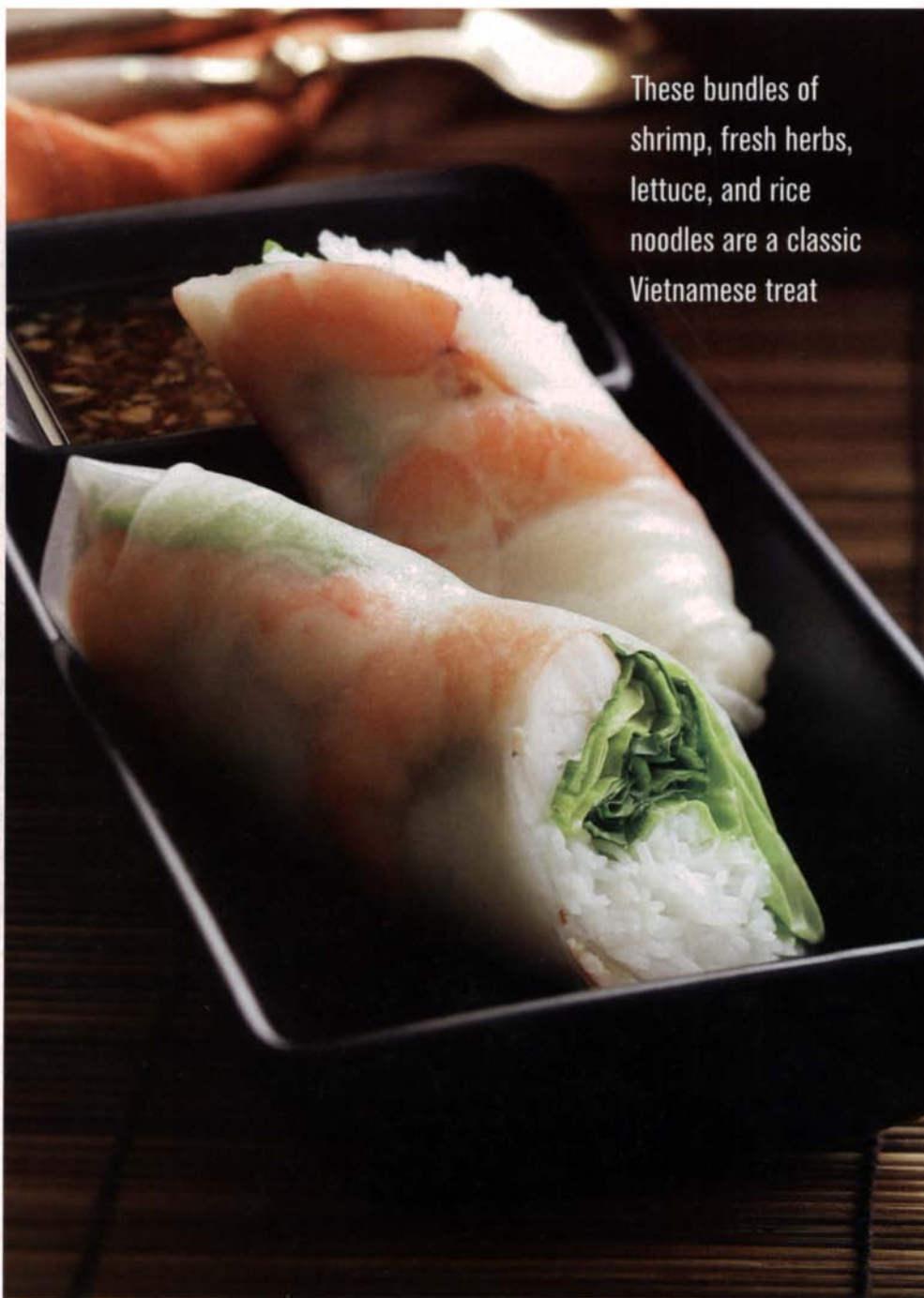
BY NANCIE McDERMOTT

**T**he classic Vietnamese summer roll (*goi cuon*) is as lovely to look at as it is delicious to eat: plump shrimp, fragrant herbs, leaf lettuce, and rice noodles bundled in a soft rice paper wrapper, served alongside a flavor-packed dipping sauce or two. With their brilliant combination of colors, flavors, and textures, *goi cuon* epitomize the grace and vibrancy of Vietnamese cuisine, and they're lighter and fresher tasting than crisp fried spring rolls.

Given their delicate beauty, one might assume that summer rolls are too difficult to make at home, but that's far from true. Not only can you make your own summer rolls, you can make them easily and well. Most of the ingredients are widely available (for sources, see p. 82), and once you learn to handle the rice paper, making summer rolls is a simple matter of preparing your filling ingredients—you can do most of it ahead—and wrapping them up.

Summer rolls can showcase endless combinations of fillings. The quintessential shrimp-and-mint version, shown in the photo at right, is far from the only option. By simply swapping the shrimp with another protein—beef, chicken, tofu—while keeping the other ingredients the same, you can modify the summer roll without reinventing it (see the recipe on p. 56). Whatever's on the grill tonight can have a tasty encore tomorrow, rolled into a rice wrapper with noodles, lettuce, and herbs.

As with making pancakes, your first several summer rolls may not be winners, so buy two or three packages of wrappers. You'll have plenty for practice, and once you know how to make summer rolls, I suspect you'll want a 24/7 pantry supply.



These bundles of shrimp, fresh herbs, lettuce, and rice noodles are a classic Vietnamese treat

Once you've mastered the original, it's easy to create flavor twists by swapping the shrimp for another protein.



# Making summer rolls, step by step

## Get the elements ready

It's important to have all the summer roll elements prepared before you assemble the rolls. Prepare one of the protein filling recipes on pp. 58-59 and give it time to cool to room temperature. Then proceed with the recipe

### Summer Rolls

*Yields 16 rolls; serves six to eight as an appetizer.*

Serve the summer rolls with one or both of the dipping sauces on p. 59.

- 6½ ounces thin dried rice noodles** (for sources, see p. 82)
- 16 large round rice paper wrappers** (about 8 inches in diameter); plus a few extra in case of breakage (for sources, see p. 82)
- 20 leaves bibb or Boston lettuce**, cut crosswise into 1-inch-wide strips (to yield about 5 cups loosely packed strips)
- 1 cup packed fresh mint leaves**
- 1 cup packed fresh cilantro or basil leaves**, or a mix
- 4 scallions**, trimmed, cut into 4-inch-long pieces, and sliced lengthwise into thin strips
- 1 filling recipe** (see pp. 58-59), cooled

Bring a medium saucepan of water to a rolling boil over high heat. Drop in the rice noodles. Remove the pan from the heat and let stand for 8 to 10 minutes, gently lifting and stirring the noodles now and then as they soften, to cook them evenly and to keep them from clumping. Drain the noodles in a colander and rinse them with cold water to stop the cooking. You should have about 4 cups cooked noodles.

Arrange the noodles, rice paper wrappers, lettuce, herbs, scallions, and cooled filling (shrimp, beef, chicken, or tofu) around a large cutting board or tray set before you. Have a platter nearby for the finished rolls.

Assemble the rolls as described at right and serve them, cut in half or in pieces.

## Soften the rice paper

You'll need a skillet of very warm water to soften the rice paper, and a cutting board or tray to lay them on.



**Make-ahead tip:** You can assemble summer rolls up to 2 hours in advance as long as you cover them with a damp dishtowel and wrap well them with plastic to keep the rice paper from drying out.

**When you're ready to roll:** Fill a large skillet halfway with very warm water. Slide a sheet of rice paper into the water and press gently to submerge it until it becomes very pliable, 15 to 30 seconds. Remove the rice paper carefully, shaking gently to help excess water drain off, and lay it before you on a cutting board or tray. (If the water becomes too cool to soften the paper, reheat it briefly on the stove.)

A *Fine Cooking* reader gave these recipes a real-world test. Here are the results:

*"The instructions were clear and detailed. If you do the prep work ahead of time, all the steps are very simple. I loved that these summer rolls were pretty enough to serve as a special dinner for company, and completely different than standard summer fare. They tasted so fresh and light, and I loved the spicy kick of the dipping sauces!"*

—Cassia Schell, Bay Village, Ohio

## Assemble the rolls

It's best to make summer rolls one at a time so that the wrappers don't dry out as you roll.



**Line up the ingredients:** Starting on the lowest third of the wrapper and working away from you, line up a narrow tangle of noodles (about  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup), a row of lettuce strips (about  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup), 5 to 7 good-size mint leaves, a row of cilantro or basil leaves, and a row of scallion strips. Leave about 1 inch of empty space along the wrapper's bottom and side edges.

**Take care with the first fold:** Starting from the edge closest to you, roll the wrapper up and over the fillings. Stop after the first turn to tuck and compress everything snugly into the wrapper. Once the first turn is good and tight, fold the right and left sides of the wrapper in onto the roll, closing off the ends, as though making an envelope.

**Add the protein:** Just above the cylinder you've already rolled, lay four shrimp halves, pink side down, a few strips of chicken, or one strip of beef or tofu. Roll the wrapper tightly, all the way to the top, and press the seam closed. If the wrapper is too dry to stick, dip your finger in the water and run it along the paper to moisten and then press the seam closed. Set the roll, seam side down, on the platter. Continue to fill and roll up the rice paper sheets until you've made 16 rolls. (Don't let the finished rolls touch one another or they'll stick.) Serve immediately (or drape a damp dishtowel over the rolls, wrap the platter tightly in plastic, and serve within 2 hours).

**Filling tip:** Overfilled wrappers will split, so resist the urge to pile on the delicious and colorful components. Use just enough to fill out the roll without straining the delicate wrapper.



# Four summer roll fillings

Whichever filling you make, it will need time to cool before you assemble the summer rolls. Warm fillings may wilt the lettuce and herbs.



## Classic Boiled Shrimp

*Yields enough for 16 summer rolls.*

**32 medium (31-40 count) shrimp, in their shells**

Bring a medium saucepan of water to a rolling boil over high heat. Drop the shrimp into the water and cook until they turn pink and opaque, 1 to 2 minutes. Drain in a colander and rinse with cold water until the shrimp are cool. Peel the shrimp, slice them in half lengthwise, and devein if necessary. Use in summer rolls as directed on p. 57.

## Honey Ginger Chicken

*Yields enough for 16 summer rolls.*

**2 tablespoons fish sauce  
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh ginger  
1 tablespoon soy sauce  
1 tablespoon honey  
½ teaspoon kosher salt  
¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper  
¾ pound boneless, skinless chicken breast  
2 tablespoons vegetable oil**

In a medium bowl, combine the fish sauce, ginger, soy sauce, honey, salt, and pepper; stir to mix everything well. Cut the chicken into long, slender strips (¼ inch thick), add to the bowl, and toss to coat with the marinade. Set aside for 15 to 20 minutes or cover and refrigerate for up to one day.

Heat the oil in a 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chicken and the marinade and cook, stirring occasionally, until the chicken strips are cooked through, about 3 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a plate, cover loosely, and let cool to room temperature (or refrigerate, covered, until ready to roll). Use in summer rolls as directed on p. 57.

## Grilled Sesame Beef

*Yields enough for 16 summer rolls.*

**1 tablespoon fish sauce  
2 teaspoons soy sauce  
2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil  
½ teaspoon granulated sugar  
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
¾ pound beef flank steak  
2 tablespoons sesame seeds**

In a medium bowl, combine the fish sauce, soy sauce, toasted sesame oil, sugar, and pepper; stir until the sugar dissolves. Add the beef and turn to coat well. Set aside for 30 minutes or cover and refrigerate for up to one day.

Heat an oiled grill or grill pan until very hot. Remove the meat from the marinade and let the excess drip off. Grill the beef until nicely browned on one side, 4 to 5 minutes. Turn and cook until browned on the other side and done to your liking, another 4 to 5 minutes for medium rare. Transfer to a cutting board and set aside to cool to room temperature.

While the steak cools, toast the sesame seeds in a small dry frying pan over medium heat, shaking the pan and stirring until they're lightly browned and fragrant, about 3 minutes. Spread the seeds on a small plate to cool.

Slice the steak across the grain into 4- to 6-inch-long, slender (about ⅛- to ¼-inch-thick) strips. You should have at least 16 strips. Sprinkle on the toasted sesame seeds, toss to distribute them evenly, transfer to a plate, cover, and refrigerate until ready to roll. Use in summer rolls as directed on p. 57.

**Tip:** Cut the shrimp in half and the beef, chicken, and tofu into long slender strips, so that the roll holds together when you bite into it.

## Two tasty dipping sauces

Serve the rolls whole, halved, or in bite-size pieces, with one or both of the dipping sauces.



### Ginger Sesame Tofu

*Yields enough for 16 summer rolls.*

Use the firmest tofu you can find for this recipe and handle it carefully, as even firm tofu can break fairly easily.

**14 ounces firm tofu**  
**3 tablespoons soy sauce**  
**2 tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh ginger**  
**1 tablespoon granulated sugar**  
**2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil**  
**½ teaspoon kosher salt**  
**2 tablespoons vegetable oil**

Lay the block of tofu flat on a cutting board and slice it lengthwise into four even pieces. Flip each piece onto its wide side and slice again into four even pieces to get a total of 16 long (about 4½-inch) rectangular strips. Lay the tofu strips on a paper towel and pat them dry. In a small (about 11x7-inch) baking dish, combine the soy sauce, ginger, sugar, sesame oil, and salt. Stir until the sugar and salt dissolve. Add the tofu strips and carefully turn them until they're evenly coated with the marinade. Let the tofu stand at room temperature for 15 to 20 minutes, turning once. (Or marinate the tofu for up to 2 hours, covered, in the refrigerator.)

Gently transfer the tofu from the marinade to a platter, brushing off any ginger clinging to it. Blot the tofu dry with paper towels. Heat the vegetable oil in a medium (10-inch) nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Carefully add half of the tofu strips. Cook until nicely browned on one side, 1 to 2 minutes, and then gently turn with a spatula to brown the opposite side, another 1 to 2 minutes. Return the cooked tofu to the platter and cook the remaining tofu in the same manner. Let the tofu cool to room temperature or refrigerate, covered, until ready to roll. Use in summer rolls as directed on p. 57.

### Nuoc Cham

*Yields about 1 cup.*

Sweet, salty, tangy, and spicy, this is the classic Vietnamese dipping sauce.

**2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh garlic**  
**¼ cup granulated sugar**  
**1 teaspoon chile-garlic sauce**  
*(tuong ot toi; for sources, see p. 82)*  
**6 tablespoons fish sauce**  
**¼ cup fresh lime juice**

Combine the garlic, sugar, and chile-garlic sauce in a large mortar and mash to a paste. (Or combine them on your cutting board and mash to a coarse paste using a fork and the back of a spoon.) Scrape the paste into a small bowl and add the fish sauce, lime juice, and 6 tablespoons water. Whisk until the sugar dissolves. Serve in individual bowls for dipping or refrigerate, covered, for up to a week.

### Pineapple Lime Dipping Sauce

*Yields about 1 cup.*

This is a vegetarian option that everyone will love.

**¼ cup drained canned pineapple chunks, plus ¼ cup of their juice**  
**¼ cup soy sauce**  
**¼ cup fresh lime juice**  
**3 tablespoons granulated sugar**  
**2 tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh cilantro**  
**1 tablespoon coarsely chopped garlic**  
**2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil**  
**2 teaspoons kosher salt**  
**¼ teaspoon chile-garlic sauce**  
*(tuong ot toi; for sources, see p. 82)*

In a food processor or blender, combine all the ingredients and blend until smooth. Serve at room temperature in individual dipping bowls, or refrigerate, covered, for two or three days.

*Nancie McDermott is a cooking teacher and cookbook author. Her book Quick & Easy Vietnamese will be published next spring. ♦*



# Saucy Chicken Wings

Grill first, then toss  
with a sweet or spicy sauce

BY TONY ROSENFELD

**A**fter much research in the field, I've concluded there's a correlation between good summer eating and the number of napkins needed for the task. Maybe that's why I love making grilled chicken wings for friends. I serve up the wings as an appetizer and quickly set the mood for a fun evening. My guests can lounge around the grill, go to work on the wings, and sip beer while I finish cooking the rest of the meal.

**My grilled wings take about 30 minutes from start to finish.** I grill the wings over a moderate fire. While they cook, I whisk up a quick sauce. The technique is basically the opposite of a marinade. Instead of trying to infuse flavors into the chicken before cooking, the sauce saturates the grilled wings with vibrant flavors afterward. This "sauce after" approach eliminates the need to plan ahead for marinating. You can decide to make these wings when you're at the market and have them ready to go shortly after you get home. And you don't have to worry about burning a sugary marinade or basting sauce on the grill.

**A moderate fire browns and crisps.** Resist the temptation to cook the wings quickly over high heat. Instead, cook them gently over medium or medium-high heat so the skin crisps and browns while the meat inside cooks.

When the wings are done, toss them with one of the intensely flavored sauces at right. I admit these wings will be slightly messy to eat, but that's part of the fun (and that's what the napkins are for). After all, it's summer.

Asian-Style Barbecue Sauce  
for a sweet-salty tang

# Six sauces, six personalities

## Grilled Chicken Wings

*Serves four to six as an appetizer.*

It's easy enough to double or triple this recipe. Just be sure to do the same with the accompanying sauce.

**2 pounds chicken wings (about 10 whole wings), split at the wing joints as shown below (discard the wingtips or save for stock)**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**Oil for the grill**

**1 sauce recipe (at right)**

Heat a gas grill to medium high or prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire. Season the wings with 1 teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper.

Rub the grill grate with oil. Grill the wings, covered on a gas grill or uncovered over a charcoal fire, flipping every couple of minutes, until they're browned and crisp and completely cooked through, about 20 minutes; if there are flare-ups, move the wings to another part of the grill. If the wings begin to burn at any point, reduce the heat to medium or transfer the wings to a cooler part of the grill.

As the wings are done, transfer them to a large bowl. Stir the sauce and toss with the wings (unless the sauce recipe instructs otherwise). Serve immediately on a platter and with plenty of napkins.



*Using a sharp chef's knife, split the wings at the joints, saving the middle section and drumette for grilling. Discard the wingtips or save them for stock.*

## Buffalo-Style Sauce with Rosemary & Lemon

*Yields enough for 2 pounds wings.*

Frank's Red Hot sauce, which is used in the original recipe for Buffalo wings, is widely available in supermarkets.

**⅓ cup Frank's Red Hot Original sauce**  
**¼ cup unsalted butter, melted**  
**1 teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary**  
**Finely grated zest of 1 lemon**

In a small bowl, whisk the hot sauce, butter, rosemary, and lemon zest.

## Asian-Style Barbecue Sauce

*Yields enough for 2 pounds wings.*

**¼ cup tomato ketchup**  
**2 tablespoons soy sauce**  
**1 tablespoon light brown sugar**  
**1 tablespoon rice vinegar**  
**4 scallions (both white and green parts), trimmed and thinly sliced**  
**Large pinch dried red chile flakes**

In a small bowl, whisk the ketchup, soy sauce, brown sugar, rice vinegar, half of the scallions, and the chile flakes. Reserve the remaining scallions to sprinkle on the wings after tossing.

## Scallion-Jalapeño Salsa

*Yields enough for 2 pounds wings.*

**8 to 10 scallions (both white and green parts), trimmed and thinly sliced**  
**½ fresh jalapeño, cored, seeded, and finely diced; more to taste**  
**¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

In a small bowl, whisk the scallions, jalapeño, olive oil, ½ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper. Taste and add more salt, pepper, and diced jalapeño, if needed; the salsa should be spicy but not overpowering. Let sit for at least 30 minutes and up to 2 hours before serving. Serve this loose salsa in a small bowl alongside the platter of wings, letting guests spoon the salsa onto their own portion.

## Spicy Peanut Sauce

*Yields enough for 2 pounds wings.*

**3 tablespoons smooth peanut butter, preferably natural**  
**2 tablespoons soy sauce**  
**2 tablespoons honey**  
**2 tablespoons peanut or canola oil**  
**2 tablespoons rice vinegar**  
**1 tablespoon finely diced lemongrass**  
**2 teaspoons Thai chile sauce (I like Sriracha)**  
**¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro**  
**¼ cup chopped fresh mint**

Combine the peanut butter, soy sauce, honey, oil, vinegar, lemongrass, chile sauce, half of the cilantro, and half of the mint in a mini or standard food processor. Process until smooth. The sauce should be slightly loose but still thick enough to coat the wings; if it isn't, add 1 or 2 tablespoons of water and process again to loosen it. (The sauce thickens as it sits, so leave it in the processor and if necessary, thin it again just before using.) Reserve the remaining cilantro and mint to sprinkle on the wings after tossing.

## Honey-Mustard Thyme Sauce

*Yields enough for 2 pounds wings.*

**¼ cup whole-grain mustard**  
**¼ cup honey**  
**2 tablespoons finely diced shallots (from 1 small shallot)**  
**½ teaspoon salt**  
**¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**  
**2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme**

In a small bowl, whisk the mustard, honey, shallots, salt, pepper, and half of the thyme. Reserve the remaining thyme to sprinkle on the wings after tossing.

## Sweet & Sour Orange Glaze

*Yields enough for 2 pounds wings.*

**½ cup sweet orange marmalade**  
**2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons rice vinegar**  
**1 tablespoon soy sauce**  
**1½ teaspoons Thai chile sauce (I like Sriracha)**

In a small bowl, whisk all the ingredients. Toss with the grilled wings.

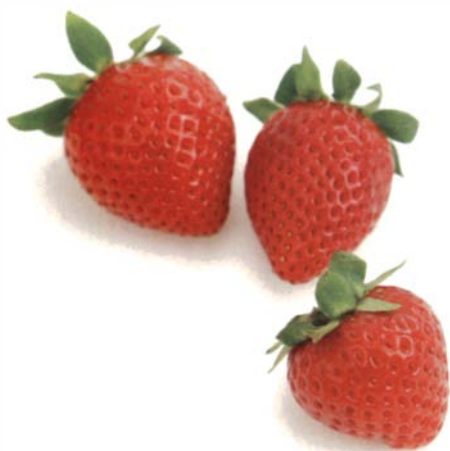
*Tony Rosenfeld is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking.* ♦



# A dozen recipes for strawberry

From almost instant to simply spectacular, these new ways with strawberries sweeten up the classics

BY LORI LONGBOTHAM



One of my fondest memories is of a warm summer morning I spent picking strawberries in Maine with my friend Barbara. We sat down among the berries and ate all we could, giddy from the indulgence.

No doubt, the best strawberries are the ones you eat in the patch, where the warmth from the sun makes them even more fragrant and juicy. But if you don't have a patch nearby, the berries at farmers' markets are almost as sweet because, generally, berries that don't have to be shipped long distances are allowed to ripen fully on the vine, which increases the sugar content and flavor tremendously.

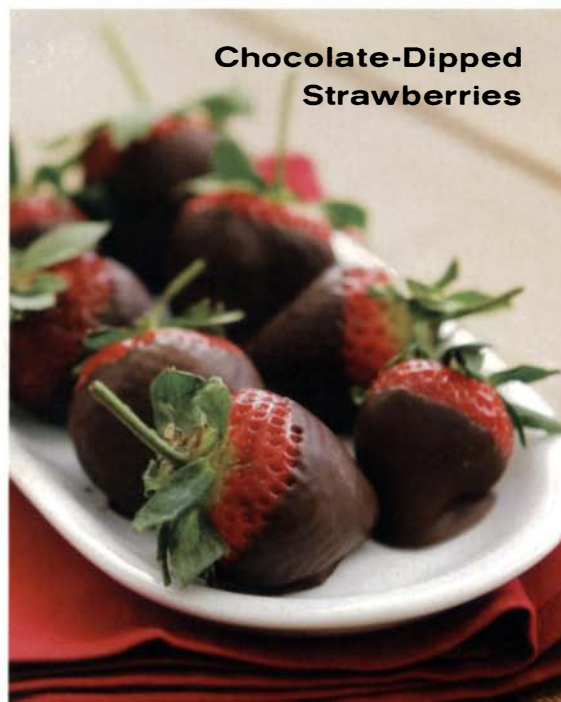
In my memory, strawberries are the first seasonal fruit to become available year-round. I guess that's because we love them so much that we'd rather eat inferior berries in December than none at all. Whatever the time of year, when you buy berries, choose them with care. Look for ones that are bright flame red to deep scarlet, without white or green on their shoulders. They should be plump, firm, and deeply aromatic. Their green caps should look healthy.

And when you find in-season local berries, don't pass them by; they're a perfect opportunity to sink your teeth into summer's sweetness.

**Strawberries beg to be eaten simply, but they're happy to get dressed up, too.** One of my favorite desserts is a bowl of sliced strawberries mixed with a flavored sugar (see p. 66). But when strawberries are bountiful, I just have to make all my old favorites, and as a recipe developer, I can't resist trying new ideas, too. So on these pages, you'll find more than a few pleasant surprises. I wasn't convinced that baking strawberries was a good idea until I created the strawberry crisp on p. 67. It tastes just like buttered toast with jam. The biscuits for the strawberry shortcake have a sublime, unusual texture because they're made with whipped cream. And instead of the usual sliced fresh berries, I top the shortcakes with sweet, saucy roasted strawberries. Those same roasted strawberries make a terrific topping for ice cream sundaes. Add a dollop of strawberry whipped cream and a chocolate-dipped strawberry, and you've got a perfect celebration of summer.



Strawberry Crisp



Chocolate-Dipped Strawberries



Triple Strawberry Ice Cream Sundaes



# desserts



## Roasted Strawberry Shortcakes with Vanilla Biscuits

*Serves six.*

These vanilla biscuits are best fresh from the oven, so if you can, bake them about an hour before you plan to serve the shortcakes. The whipped cream in the biscuit dough is a bit unusual, and the results are out of this world.

**8 ounces (1 $\frac{3}{4}$  cups) unbleached all-purpose flour**  
 **$\frac{1}{2}$  cup plus 3 tablespoons granulated sugar; more for sprinkling**  
**1 tablespoon baking powder**  
 **$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon table salt**  
**1 $\frac{1}{2}$  cups chilled heavy cream; more for brushing**  
**2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract**  
**1 quart (about 1 pound) small ripe fresh strawberries, hulled**  
 **$\frac{1}{2}$  cup sour cream**  
**2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar**

Position a rack in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 425°F. Grease a large baking sheet.

In a large bowl, whisk the flour, 3 tablespoons of the sugar, the baking powder, and the salt.

In another large bowl, beat 1 cup of the cream with an electric mixer on medium-high speed just until the cream holds soft peaks when the beaters are lifted. Beat in the vanilla.

Make a well in the center of the flour mixture, add the whipped cream, and stir with a fork just until the mixture begins to hold together as dough. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead just until well combined, about six times. Pat the dough until it's about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick. Cut out a total of six rounds with a 3-inch crinkle- or smooth-edged biscuit cutter, gathering the scraps and reshaping as needed. Lightly brush the tops of the rounds with cream and

sprinkle with granulated sugar. Arrange the biscuits on the baking sheet. Bake until golden brown, 12 to 15 minutes. Transfer with a spatula to a rack and let cool.

Increase the oven temperature to 450°F. Meanwhile, toss the strawberries in a bowl with the remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup granulated sugar. Transfer to a rimmed baking sheet. When the oven is ready, roast the berries, stirring every 5 minutes, until they're soft and fragrant, about 15 minutes total.

To serve, whip the remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup cream with the sour cream and confectioners' sugar until it holds soft peaks when the beaters are lifted. Split each biscuit horizontally with a fork, lay a bottom half on each of six serving plates, and spoon over a portion of the warm roasted berries. Garnish with a dollop of cream, add the biscuit top, drizzle with the syrup from the roasted berries, and serve immediately.

**A new secret for tender biscuits: whipped cream**



*The cream is first whipped and then folded into the dry ingredients with a fork to give the biscuits an ethereal texture.*



# Three strawberry recipes: great alone,



## Roasted Strawberries

*Yields about 1¾ cups.*

As the strawberries roast, their juice thickens into a beautiful, sweet sauce.

**1 quart (about 1 pound) small ripe fresh strawberries, hulled**  
**½ cup granulated sugar**

Position a rack in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F. Toss the strawberries in a bowl with the sugar. Transfer to a rimmed baking sheet. When the oven is hot, roast the strawberries, giving them a stir every 5 minutes, until they're soft and fragrant, about 15 minutes total. Transfer the baking sheet to a rack to cool for 5 minutes then scrape the berries with their sauce into a small bowl. If using in the ice cream sundaes, chill in the refrigerator until cold, about 2 hours, or up to a day.



## Strawberry Whipped Cream

*Yields 2 cups.*

**10 small ripe fresh strawberries, hulled**  
**¾ cup heavy cream**  
**2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar**  
**Pinch table salt**

Purée the strawberries in a food processor until smooth. Pour through a fine sieve set over a bowl, pressing hard on the solids. (You should have about ¼ cup purée.) Discard the solids. Refrigerate the purée until very cold, about 15 minutes.

In a deep bowl, beat the cream with an electric mixer on medium-high speed just until the cream begins to thicken. Add the sugar and beat just until soft peaks form when the beaters are lifted. Slowly beat in half of the strawberry purée and the salt. Beat just to stiff peaks. Drizzle the remaining purée over the cream and gently fold it in with a rubber spatula. Serve immediately, or refrigerate, covered, for a few hours, whisking lightly to recombine before serving.



## Chocolate-Dipped Strawberries

*Yields about 1 dozen.*

The secrets to perfection: Use the best strawberries and chocolate you can, and be sure your strawberries are bone-dry before you dip them into the melted chocolate or the chocolate will seize into a mass.

**3 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped into almond-size pieces**  
**2 teaspoons neutral vegetable oil, such as grapeseed or canola**  
**1 pint medium-size ripe fresh strawberries (preferably with stems), rinsed and dried**

Melt the chocolate with the oil in a small, deep heatproof bowl set in a skillet holding about 1 inch of barely simmering water, whisking occasionally until smooth. Remove the bowl from the heat.

Line a small rimmed baking sheet with waxed paper. Tilt the bowl to pool the chocolate on one side. Dip each strawberry into the chocolate to cover about two-thirds of the berry, or until the chocolate reaches the strawberry's shoulders. Turn the berry to coat it evenly, lift it out of the chocolate, and gently shake off any excess. Carefully lay it on the waxed paper. If the dipping chocolate begins to cool and thicken, return the bowl to the water bath to heat it briefly.

Let the berries stand at room temperature for 15 minutes and then refrigerate until the chocolate is set, 20 to 30 minutes. Carefully remove the berries from the waxed paper. Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to 8 hours before serving.

**Buying tip: Smaller berries**  
seem to have the **best flavor;**  
the huge ones, while striking, are  
often woolly and bland.





# happy together

## Triple Strawberry Ice Cream Sundaes

*Serves four to six.*

Strawberry sauce, strawberry whipped cream, vanilla ice cream, and chocolate-covered strawberries. Yum, yum, yum.

1 quart vanilla ice cream  
Roasted Strawberries (see the recipe at far left), refrigerated in a covered bowl until cold, about 2 hours  
Strawberry Whipped Cream (see the recipe at left) or lightly sweetened whipped cream  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup toasted sliced almonds  
4 to 6 Chocolate-Dipped Strawberries (see the recipe at left)

In tall glasses, layer scoops of the ice cream with the roasted strawberries. Top with a dollop of whipped cream, a scattering of almonds, and a chocolate-dipped strawberry. Serve immediately.

## Handling and storing strawberries

Strawberries are delicate, so handle them as little as possible to prevent bruising. When you bring them home, carefully sort out any that are mushy, moldy, or discolored. One bad berry can spoil the whole bowl. Spread the berries in a single layer on a baking sheet or shallow baking dish lined with paper towels. Stored in the refrigerator, they can keep for up to three days, but the sooner you eat them, the better. I don't wash them until I'm ready to use them, and then I'm very gentle and I use as little water as possible. Don't hull berries until after you've washed and dried them.





# Flavored sugars for quick desserts

These “almost-instant” flavored sugars are a boon to busy cooks and strawberry lovers. Just hull and slice a pint of strawberries and add one of these flavored sugars. Let the berries sit for 5 or 10 minutes for the sugar to dissolve and the flavors to blend, and you’ve got dessert.

## Lemon or Lime Sugar

**2 tablespoons granulated sugar**  
**½ teaspoon finely grated lemon or lime zest**

Process the sugar and zest in a coffee or spice grinder (or pound the zest and half the sugar in a mortar until finely ground; stir in the remaining sugar). Or stir the ingredients together in a bowl until well combined.

**Serving idea:** Hull and slice a pint of strawberries and stir in the lemon sugar. Serve layered with strawberry and mango sorbets in a tall glass.

## Cardamom Sugar

**2 tablespoons granulated sugar**  
**Seeds from 1 green or white cardamom pod (or a generous ½ teaspoon ground cardamom)**

Process the sugar and cardamom seeds in a coffee or spice grinder (or pound the seeds and half the sugar in a mortar until finely ground; stir in the remaining sugar). Or stir the ground cardamom and sugar in a bowl until well combined.

**Serving idea:** Hull and slice a pint of strawberries and stir in the cardamom sugar. Serve over rice pudding.

## Fennel Sugar

**2 tablespoons granulated sugar**  
**Scant ¼ teaspoon fennel seeds**

Process the sugar and fennel seeds in a coffee or spice grinder (or pound the seeds and half the sugar in a mortar until finely ground; stir in the remaining sugar).

**Serving idea:** Hull and slice a pint of strawberries and stir in the

fennel sugar. Serve with dollops of sweetened Greek yogurt or fresh ricotta cheese.

## Mint Sugar

**2 tablespoons granulated sugar**  
**4 to 6 fresh mint leaves**

Process the sugar and mint leaves in a coffee or spice grinder (or pound the mint and half the sugar in a mortar until finely ground; stir in the remaining sugar).

**Serving idea:** Hull and slice a pint of strawberries, toss with cubes of mango, and stir in the mint sugar.

## Ginger Sugar

**2 tablespoons granulated sugar**  
**1 quarter-size piece crystallized ginger**

Process the sugar and ginger in a coffee or spice grinder (or pound the ginger and half the sugar in a mortar until finely ground; stir in the remaining sugar).

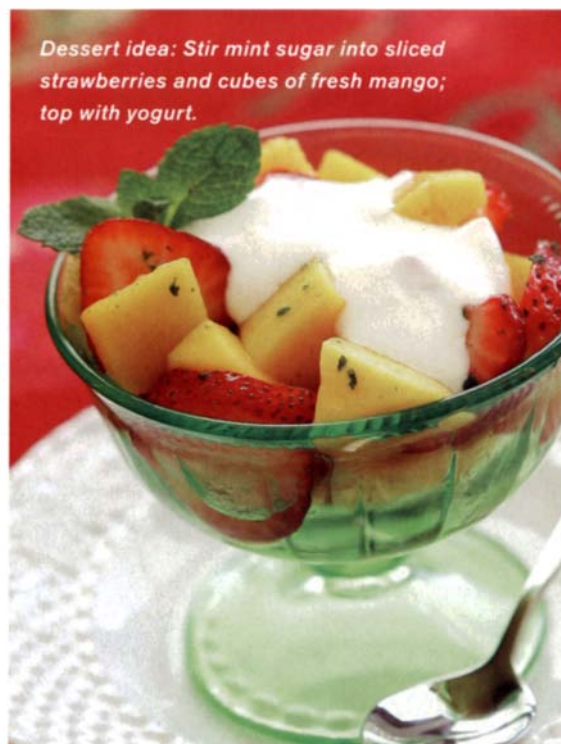
**Serving idea:** Hull and slice a pint of strawberries and stir in the ginger sugar. Spoon over brownies or meringues.

## Vanilla Sugar

**2 tablespoons granulated sugar**  
**1-inch piece of a vanilla bean, finely chopped**

Process the sugar and chopped vanilla in a coffee or spice grinder (or pound the vanilla and half the sugar in a mortar until finely ground; stir in the remaining sugar).

**Serving idea:** Hull and slice a pint of strawberries and stir in the vanilla sugar. Serve spooned over toasted pound cake, angel food cake, or brioche with strawberry ice cream.



*Dessert idea: Stir mint sugar into sliced strawberries and cubes of fresh mango; top with yogurt.*

## How to hull strawberries

Don't mar the strawberries' beauty by cutting straight across their tops to remove the green cap. If you have a strawberry huller, use it. If not, use a sharp paring knife and point it down under the cap at an angle to slice out a cone-shaped piece of the strawberry under the cap.





## Strawberry Crisp

*Serves eight.*

This comforting crisp reminds me of buttered toast and strawberry jam. For the breadcrumbs, I always use firm-textured white bread or a white sourdough, removing the crusts and pulsing cubes of the bread in a food processor until I have large, irregular, coarse crumbs.

3 pints small ripe fresh strawberries, hulled and halved

2½ cups coarse fresh white breadcrumbs

½ cup plus 2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar

½ teaspoon finely grated lemon zest

¼ teaspoon table salt

½ cup coarsely chopped hazelnuts

¼ cup unsalted butter, melted

3 tablespoons granulated sugar

Heavy cream or vanilla ice cream for serving (optional)

Position a rack in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F.

In a bowl, toss the strawberries, 1 cup of the breadcrumbs, ½ cup of the confectioner's sugar, the lemon zest, and the salt; scrape into an 8x8-inch Pyrex baking dish. In another bowl, toss the remaining 1½ cups breadcrumbs with the hazelnuts, melted butter, and granulated sugar; sprinkle evenly over the berries. Bake until the berries are bubbling, about 40 minutes. Let cool on a wire rack for about 10 minutes.

Spoon the warm crisp into bowls and top with a drizzle of heavy cream or a scoop of ice cream, if you like.

---

*Lori Longbotham is the author of Luscious Berry Desserts. ♦*

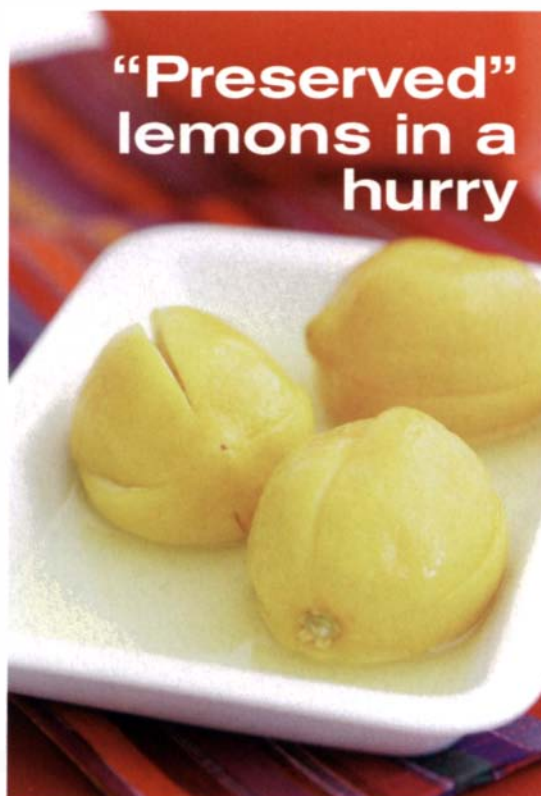




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BY JENNIFER ARMENTROUT



Over the years, I've learned lots of neat tricks from our authors, but I've never been so impressed as I was the day I tried the microwave "preserved" lemons that Bruce Aidells uses in the marinade for his Lemony Moroccan-Style Chicken Kebabs (see p. 53). In just a few minutes, you can make a fair approximation of this North African staple ingredient that normally takes weeks to prepare. Granted, they're not salty like the genuine article, but it's nice to know that the next time I'm flipping through a Moroccan cookbook and get the urge to make something with preserved lemons, I won't have to wait a month to try it.

To make quickie "preserved" lemons, cut four deep, equally spaced lengthwise gashes into each lemon. Put the lemons in a small microwavable container. Cover and microwave on high for 4 minutes or until the lemons are soft and the juice has exuded from them. If not soft, microwave in 30-second intervals until they are. Let the lemons cool briefly before using.

## Crumbled feta holds its own



A confession: We generally consider solid blocks of cheese superior to their prepackaged shredded or crumbled counterparts. Nonetheless, we aim to be open-minded, so as we were preparing for our feta Tasting Panel (for results, see p. 76) we decided it would be edifying to give crumbled feta a try. We chose one widely available brand, Athenos, and we compared its crumbled feta to its feta packaged in a plastic tub with brine and its feta shrink-wrapped in cryovac packaging with a bit of brine. The feta in the tub of brine was salty, milky, and more intense than the other two, but it wasn't as moist as we expected. Surprisingly, the cryovac and crumbled versions were pretty much on par. The crumbles tasted decent (certainly good enough to toss on a salad), and they were only a tad drier than the other two.

—Kimberly Y. Masibay, associate editor



**When preparing cilantro for chopping, you don't necessarily have to remove all of the stems. Cilantro stems are quite flavorful, so if they're thin and tender-crisp (bite one to check), just chop them up along with the leaves.**



## Getting the most from fresh herbs

### Storage:

Treat fresh herbs like a bouquet of flowers: stems down in a few inches of water. Keep the bouquet loosely tented with a plastic produce bag and store in the refrigerator. This treatment keeps herbs hydrated but not too wet. Many herbs, like parsley, mint, and cilantro, may last up to two weeks this way. Exception: Cut basil is happiest around 55°F, which is colder than room temperature but warmer than the fridge. Test kitchen experience has taught us that if basil is purchased already refrigerated, it should stay that way. If cut fresh or bought unrefrigerated, keep the basil at room temperature unless it's very hot out. Regardless, cut basil rarely keeps longer than a week.

### Cleaning:

When ready to use the herbs, hold them by their stems and vigorously swish them around in a bowl of cool water until they seem free of dirt. Shake the herbs over the sink and then spin dry or blot dry with paper towels. (Curly parsley can be squeezed partially dry before blotting with paper towels.) The drier the herbs, the better they'll withstand chopping.

### Chopping:

Use a sharp chef's knife in a rock-chopping motion (the front part of the knife should be moving in a slight slicing motion as you chop). The idea is to cut through the herbs cleanly, rather than bashing and bruising them, which happens if you use a dull knife. Bruised herbs bleed a lot of their flavor out onto the cutting board, and their color dulls or blackens quickly.

### knife skills

## The julienne cut

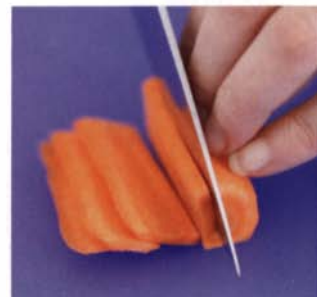
Knowing how to cut fruits and vegetables into thin little matchsticks is a basic but important skill for every cook to master. The matchstick cut, known in culinary lingo as *julienne*, is either used on its own, like in the Slivered Red Pepper, Carrot & Snap Pea Salad on p. 47, or as the first

step in dicing. Technically, the julienne cut is about 1/8 inch thick and 2 inches long. Cutting across a julienne results in a very fine dice, known in French as *brunoise*. When a larger stick or dice is needed, the same steps shown below apply—just space the cuts wider.

*If the vegetable or fruit is rounded, cut a thin slice off one side to make a flat, stabilizing base. Turn it onto this new flat side.*



*Now slice into 1/8-inch-thick slabs (or thicker for wider sticks or dice). Stack some of the slabs flat on the board—but don't try to do too many at once, or they may slide apart during the next step.*



*Slice the slabs lengthwise in the same thickness. For a shorter length, you could also slice crosswise or diagonally. If julienne is your goal, you're done.*



*To cut a dice, simply slice across the sticks.*





# How hot is the grill fire?

To test the heat of your grill fire, hold your outstretched palm an inch or two above the grill grate. The length of time you can stand the heat tells you how hot the grill is. You can use this test on gas grills as well as charcoal grills.

Time hand can be held over grill	Grill heat	Temperature range (in °F)
Less than 1 second	very hot	over 600°
1 to 2 seconds	hot	400° to 500°
3 to 4 seconds	medium	350° to 375°
5 to 7 seconds	medium low	325° to 350°

You can also use visual clues to tell how hot your charcoal fire is. When the coals are all bright red and still flaming, they're very hot—too hot for most grilling. The fire will be a little cooler when the coals are red but covered with a light ash. When the fire is medium hot, the coals will be thickly covered with a yellowish ash. For best results, keep the grilling grate about 4 inches above the coals.

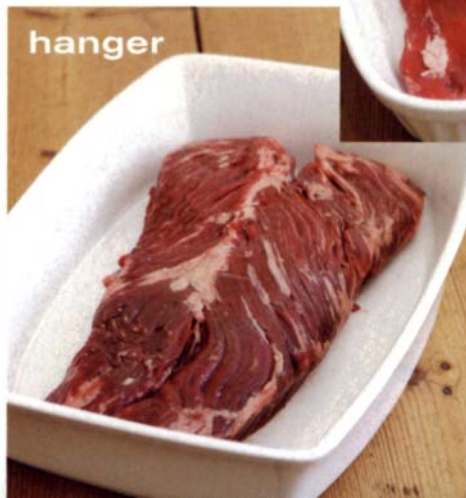
## Support a farmer—join a CSA

If the idea of supporting independent farmers and eating locally grown foods appeals to you, consider joining a CSA this summer. Short for “community supported agriculture,” CSA farms offer shares in their crops for purchase. In exchange for an investment at the beginning of the growing season, shareholders receive shares of the farm's bounty throughout the season, as well as the satisfaction of knowing that their stake in the farm helps alleviate the farmer of some of the financial risk inherent to farming. It's a win-win situation. To learn more about CSAs or to find one near you, visit [www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/csa](http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/csa).

When it comes to throwing a steak on the grill, flank steak, skirt steak, and hanger steak are three of our favorite choices. These boneless cuts from the belly area of the steer are full of rich beefy flavor and chewy texture. Because they're relatively thin with a coarse and loose grain, they absorb marinades well. And since they're thinly sliced across the

Skirt steak comes from the belly area in between the flank and the brisket, which is near the front legs. Its long, thin, belt-like shape reflects the fact that it's the preferred cut for fajitas—*fajita* means “belt” in Spanish.

Popular in French bistros, hanger steak is an interior cut that hangs off the kidney and supports the diaphragm. Hanger steak is also known as butcher's



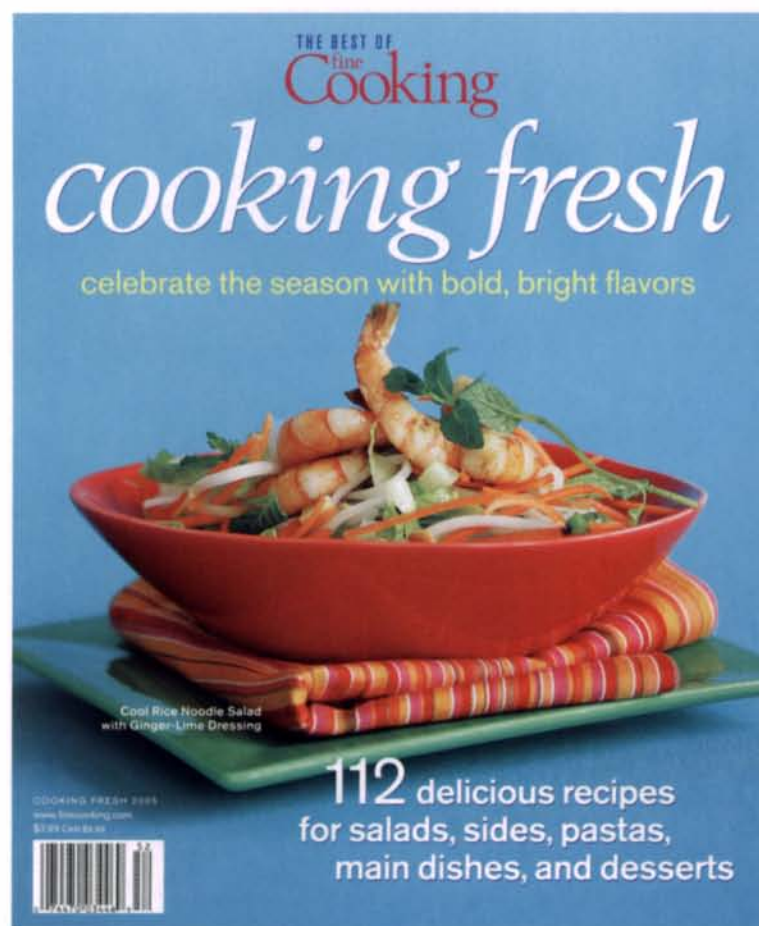
## 3 great steaks for the grill

grain before serving, portion sizes are flexible—a real advantage when you have a mixed group of steak lovers and light eaters coming to dinner.

As its name implies, flank steak comes from the flank area of the steer, which is just in front of the hind legs. Marinated, grilled flank steak was the original London broil, a name now used for many other beef cuts.

steak because butchers tend to save this prized cut for themselves. Because there's only one per animal and it's not well known outside France, it can be hard to find. If you do come across it and it still has its center membrane (as shown at right), trim it out before cooking—you'll end up with two large pieces of hanger steak after trimming.

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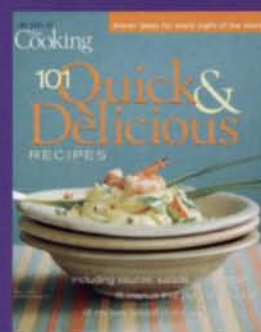
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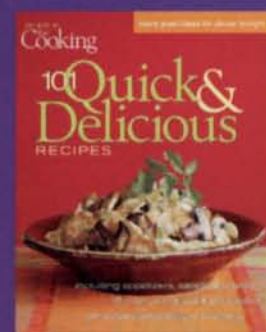
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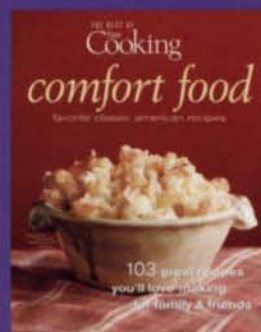
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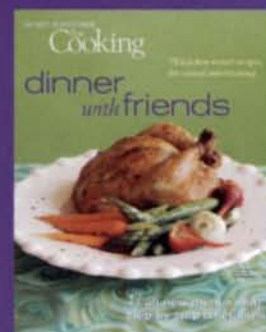
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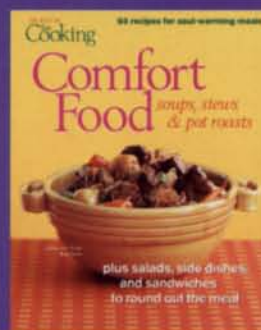
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### Slightly Spicy Sugar Snap Peas with Mint & Lime

*Serves two to three as a side dish.*

Rather than letting an opened jar of curry paste languish in the fridge, try this unconventional approach of using the paste like a condiment for pan-steamed snap peas. The peas have a mild, slow-burning heat, but if you like things hotter, try doubling the curry paste. This treatment is also good with green beans or broccoli, though you may want to leave out the mint.

**2 tablespoons unsalted butter**  
**¼ teaspoon Thai red curry paste**  
**¾ pound sugar snap peas, trimmed**

**2 tablespoons thinly sliced fresh mint**  
**2 teaspoons fresh lime juice**  
**Kosher salt**

Heat 1 tablespoon of the butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. As soon as the butter melts, add the curry paste and mash it around with the back of a fork until it's mostly broken up and distributed through the butter. Add the peas and toss with tongs to coat in the butter. Add ⅓ cup water, cover with the lid slightly ajar, raise the heat to medium high, and steam until the peas are almost tender, about 5 minutes. Remove the lid and let any remaining liquid boil off. Stir in the remaining 1 tablespoon butter, the mint, and the lime juice. Season to taste with salt and serve.

#### ingredient

## Thai Curry Paste

Intensely flavored curry pastes are a staple of Thai cuisine. These moist, concentrated blends of chiles, spices, and aromatics like lemongrass, lime leaves, shrimp paste, shallots, garlic, ginger, or cilantro are stirred into coconut milk or broth to make the sauce for all sorts of curry dishes.

Thai curry pastes are classified according to their color. Green curry pastes get their color mainly from fresh hot green chiles like serranos; they tend to be the hottest curry pastes. Red curry pastes are made with dried red chiles; they're pretty fiery, too, but not quite so much as green pastes. Yellow curry pastes are colored by turmeric and Indian-style curry powder; their spice level is relatively mild.



## Making and buying curry pastes:

You can make curry paste—it's relatively straightforward—or you can buy it. Homemade curry paste will undoubtedly taste fresher. Any good Thai cookbook will have at least a few recipes for it.

If you're pressed for time or are new to Thai curry, store-bought pastes are convenient and a good way to get acquainted with this ingredient. Thai Kitchen, a brand carried by many supermarkets, makes good jarred green and red curry pastes; we used this brand to test the Spicy Coconut Curry Sauce for scallops on p. 49 as well as the recipe above. For mail-order sources for curry pastes, as well as for the ingredients to make them, see p. 82.

## Storing curry pastes:

Tightly wrapped or sealed, curry paste lasts for about a month in the refrigerator and up to three months in the freezer.

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## Slice avocados before peeling them

When an avocado is soft and ripe, it's usually easier to slice or dice it before removing its skin. Just before serving, cut the avocado in half lengthwise and remove the pit. Using a paring knife, cut the avocado diagonally into ¼-inch (or wider) slices, without piercing through the skin. If dice is your goal, make a second set of diagonal slices perpendicular to the first. To remove the sliced or diced avocado from its skin, hold the avocado in the palm of your hand and, using a large spoon, carefully scoop out the slices.



## Tip: Buy frozen shrimp for the freshest flavor

Because most shrimp is frozen soon after being caught, you're better off buying shrimp that's still frozen instead of shrimp that's been thawed at the market for your convenience. Shrimp is highly perishable, and you don't really know how long the thawed stuff has been thawed. If you buy frozen shrimp, you can thaw it yourself just before you need it. Let it thaw overnight in the fridge, or for faster thawing, take the shrimp out of its package, put it in a bowl of cold water, and let a trickle of cold water run into the bowl while excess water goes down the drain. The shrimp should be ready to cook in about 15 minutes.

## Safety first— Tips for gas grillers

Gas grills have made it so effortless to fire up the grill that it's sometimes easy to forget to handle the propane tank with care. To keep the grill action safe and fun this season, here are a few tips from the Propane Education & Research Council:

1. Always follow the grill manufacturer's instructions on lighting the grill and make sure the grill top is open. If a match or lighter is needed to light the grill, turn the gas on only after the lit match is inserted into the proper hole.
2. Before lighting a propane gas grill for the first time or after it's been stored for the winter, use a leak-detection solution to check connections for tightness (check your owner's manual for details). Don't use matches or lighters to check for leaks.
3. If you suspect a gas leak, call the fire department immediately.
4. Never pour an accelerant such as lighter fluid or gasoline on the grill.
5. Don't allow children to play with the cylinder or the grill.
6. Don't smoke while handling a propane cylinder.
7. When the cylinder is refilled, have the supplier check for dents, damage, rust, and leaks.
8. After filling or exchanging a cylinder, take it home immediately. Keep the vehicle ventilated and the cylinder valve closed and capped.
9. Always use or store cylinders outdoors in an upright (vertical) position. Don't use, store, or transport cylinders near high temperatures (this includes storing spare cylinders near the grill).
10. When not in use, grill burner controls should be turned off and the cylinder valve closed.

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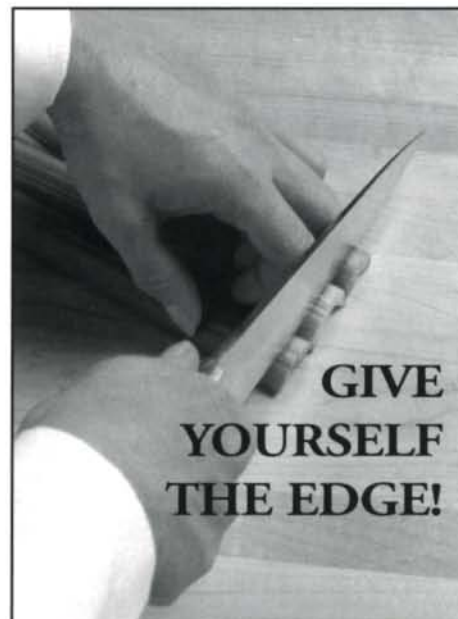


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READER SERVICE NO. 35



# Feta

The briny, tangy flavor of feta is a real attention grabber, so when adding it to a recipe, it makes sense to use the tastiest feta you can find. Imported and artisan-crafted feta made of sheep's and goat's milk can be delicious, but you may need to visit a specialty store to find them. Fortunately, supermarkets carry plenty of feta, most of it mass-produced and made of cow's milk. To find out which is worth using, we purchased six brands that are readily available in grocery stores nationwide and held a blind tasting. Their flavors differed widely: some were bright and fresh, others pungent and cheesy. All the brands we sampled were packaged in cryovac with a small amount of brine. (In this tasting, we didn't include crumbled feta or feta packed in a tub of brine, but we did compare them on another day—see p. 68 to find out what we learned.)

—Kimberly Y. Masibay, associate editor



## VALBRESO

**\$4.50 for 7 ounces; sheep's milk**

This French feta had a fresher, lighter taste than the others and stood out as the hands-down favorite. Our tasting panel loved its moist, creamy texture and well-rounded flavor profile. Lively and rich, it delivers a "nice balance of saltiness, tanginess, and creaminess."

**Runners-up** Cheeses numbered in order of preference; prices will vary.



## 2 PRESIDENT

**\$4.39 for 8 ounces; pasteurized cow's milk**

Despite a bitter aftertaste, this Wisconsin-made feta hit a lot of the right notes: Its texture was dense and crumbly without being dry, its aroma unabashedly tangy and briny, and its flavor appealingly sour and salty.



## 3 GRECO

**\$3.99 for 7 ounces; pasteurized sheep's and goat's milk**

This imported Greek feta had a soft, moist, chalky texture. Its aroma was mild with notes of earth, grass, and sour milk, but its flavor packed a real punch—powerfully sour, goaty, and spicy. Some tasters appreciated this feta's strong personality while others firmly rejected it.



## 4 ATHENOS

**\$4.19 for 8 ounces; pasteurized cow's milk**

Several tasters thought this Wisconsin-made cheese had "the classic feta aroma"—salty, sharp, intense. The texture was dry and crumbly, if a bit pasty. The trouble with this cheese was its high salt level, which all but masked a very decent underlying tangy, fruity, milky flavor.



## 5 MT. VIKOS

**\$4.99 for 7 ounces; pasteurized sheep's and goat's milk**

The intense "sheepy" flavor of this imported Greek feta curiously divided our panel. Where some tasters appreciated its balance of milky sweetness and sharp sourness, others thought it too sour, gamey, and spicy. All agreed, though, that the texture was appealingly crumbly and creamy.



## 6 ORGANIC VALLEY

**\$4.99 for 8 ounces; pasteurized organic cow's milk**

This organic Vermont cheese didn't shout "feta." It offered some saltiness and slight tang, but its bland flavor failed to impress, and its dry, rubbery texture lacked appeal.

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# How clean is your cutting board?

BY LINDA J. HARRIS, PH.D.

Which poses the greater threat to your health: your cutting board or your 10-inch chef's knife? From my perspective the answer is the cutting board. It's not that there's anything inherently dangerous about these slabs of wood or plastic, but when people slice everything from raw chicken to French bread on the same board, food-safety experts like me get the jitters.

The underlying problem is cross-contamination (the transfer of disease-causing microbes, e.g., *Salmonella* and *E. coli*, from raw meats, fish, and poultry, to foods that won't be further cooked, such as vegetables for salad, bread, or cooked meats), and it happens fairly often. One-fifth of U.S. consumers admit to using a cutting board for other foods immediately after handling raw meats or poultry.

## Cutting through the confusion

In the past decade, scientists have scrutinized cutting boards in hopes of determining which type is least likely to contribute to cross-contamination. Most of the research has focused on boards made of wood and plastic (polypropylene, polyacrylic, polyethylene, and polystyrene) because they're the most

common. For a time, experts considered plastic the safer material because it's nonporous and doesn't soak up bacteria. But then along came research suggesting that wood could be safe even though it absorbs bacteria: some studies show that bacteria die after soaking into wooden boards—probably because they get dehydrated and *maybe* because some types of woods have antimicrobial properties. Some researchers believe that once absorbed, trapped bacteria won't resurface to cross-contaminate food unless the board is vigorously hacked up, but other researchers say that when a board gets wet, bacteria can reappear on the surface. All this contradictory information is confusing, and it makes it harder for people like me to give cooks concrete recommendations.

The important thing to remember is that keeping a board clean and in good shape is the key to preventing cross-contamination. It doesn't much matter what type of board you select as long as it has a smooth, hard surface and you understand how to safely use and clean it. In a practical sense, I think the safest cutting board is the one that's easiest for you to clean. If a board is too big to fit in your sink or



## time to say goodbye

If your plastic cutting board looks like the one above, it's time to replace it, or if it's wood, have it resanded.

dishwasher, chances are, you're not going to clean it properly.

## Plastic vs. wood

Wood and plastic both have their merits and drawbacks. In pristine condition, both wooden and plastic boards are pretty easy to keep clean. It's when they begin to show signs of age that problems begin.

Plastic cutting boards don't absorb moisture, so it's relatively easy to remove surface bacteria from a new, smooth board. But when a board becomes knife-scarred, bacteria can get trapped in the crevices, and it's very difficult to scrub them out. Trapped bacteria can survive for a long time in a dormant state, so when knife cuts become numerous or deep, plastic boards should be replaced or relegated to nonfood use.

Wooden cutting boards need more TLC to maintain. Without regular oiling with food-grade mineral oil, the wood tends to dry out and crack. Frequent ex-

posure to water during cleaning and sanitizing can speed this process, especially if the board isn't properly oiled.

All wood is porous, some types more than others. So liquids applied to the cutting board can soak into the surface, bringing with them any bacteria that happen to be present. For new or well-maintained boards, these bacteria don't seem to pose much risk, as they're likely to remain trapped beneath the surface or die a few hours after the board dries. Boards that are cracked or knife-scarred are hard to clean. If you don't want to replace an older wooden board after it becomes scarred, you may be able to sand it smooth, reapply oil, and give it a fresh start.

As much as wooden boards appeal to me, the fact that wood absorbs bacteria makes me nervous, so I don't use wooden boards with high-risk foods like raw meat.

Other common materials like glass and Corian aren't porous and don't become scored with use, so they're easy to clean, though glass can be tough on knife edges. Some new boards

made of plastic or wood-fiber laminate claim to be easy on your knives, nonporous, and resistant to scratching. If such claims prove true over time, these boards could offer significant advantages.

### The cutting board rules

Follow these tips to keep your boards clean and free of bacteria.

❖ **Separate boards for separate tasks.** An easy way to reduce cross-contamination is to have boards for different tasks. You need at least two: One reserved for raw meats, fish, and poultry; another for raw vegetables and fruits and other foods that won't be cooked. Cutting boards can be identified by material, color, shape, or design.

❖ **Keep them clean.** All boards should be cleaned immediately after use. Hot soapy water, elbow grease, and a good rinse under flowing water will remove most

bacteria from a board that's in good shape. Most boards, including some wooden ones (check the label), can be cleaned and sanitized in the dishwasher.

❖ **Sanitize the surface.** After cleaning, sanitize the board with a mild bleach solution (1 teaspoon unscented bleach in 1 quart water) or undiluted white vinegar. Flood the board with the liquid, leave for 5 minutes, rinse with running water, and let it air dry. If you use a board

for raw meats and poultry, you might want to sanitize after every use. For boards used exclusively for breads, cooked meats, and cheese, frequent sanitizing isn't necessary but they still need to be kept clean.

❖ **Let it air dry.** After cleaning or sanitizing, let the board air dry, or dry it with a clean paper towel or fresh dishtowel. If the dishtowel has been used for other purposes, you could re-contaminate the board.

### Antimicrobial cutting boards—are they for real?

In the past few years, hundreds of "antimicrobial" products have come on the market, including antimicrobial cutting boards. From a food safety standpoint, they don't seem to offer any advantage. Embedded antimicrobials are only considered effective against slime- and odor-causing organisms, not disease-causing microbes, so these boards need to be cleaned and sanitized just like any other board.

## Buying tips

When purchasing a cutting board, look for features that will help you safely use it.

**Size:** The board should be small enough to comfortably fit into your sink or dishwasher.

**Color:** Having different-colored boards for different tasks can help you avoid cross-contamination.

**Channel:** A groove around the edge of a board prevents meat juices from spilling onto your countertop.

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Linda J. Harris, Ph.D., has a doctorate in microbiology and is a cooperative extension specialist in the Department of Food Science & Technology at the University of California, Davis. ♦

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#### FROM THE BACK COVER

For more about lavender, visit Eatwell Farm's web site, [Lavenderfarm.com](http://Lavenderfarm.com).

#### Summer Menu, p. 38

For Maria Helm Sinskey's Berry Buttermilk Cake, you'll need a 12-cup bundt pan. If you don't have one, visit [Chefsresource.com](http://Chefsresource.com), where a 12-cup Nordic Ware classic bundt pan sells for \$28.95.

#### Vegetable Salads, p. 44

For a mandoline, see the source in the box at right.

#### Summer Rolls, p. 55

Rice paper wrappers are available in most Asian groceries or in the ethnic food section of some supermarkets. You can also order them from Adriana's Caravan ([Adrianascaravan.com](http://Adrianascaravan.com); 800-316-0820), where a 12-ounce package of 8-inch round wrappers sells for \$3.95.

Tuong ot toi, or chile garlic sauce, is also available in Asian groceries, or find it at [Ethnicgrocer.com](http://Ethnicgrocer.com) from \$2.47 (search under "chili garlic sauce").



#### In Season, p. 24

To grow your own sweet peppers from seeds or seedlings, Ruth Lively recommends the following sources:

John Scheepers Kitchen Garden Seeds ([Kitchengardenseeds.com](http://Kitchengardenseeds.com); 860-567-6086) The company sells seeds for several varieties, including Vidi, which turn red when ripe; Ori, which turn yellow; Ariane, which ripen to orange; and Diamond, which turn white.

The Territorial Seed Company ([Territorial-seed.com](http://Territorial-seed.com); 541-942-9547), sells pepper plants and pepper seeds. Ruth recommends the following varieties: Golden Bell, Gourmet (orange), Purple Beauty, Chocolate Beauty, Northstar (red) and Staddon's Select (red).

The Cook's Garden ([Cooksgarden.com](http://Cooksgarden.com); 800-457-9703) sells both seeds and plants, including Blushing Beauty, which ripens a creamy yellow blushed with red, and Great Stuff, an extra-thick-walled variety good for stuffing.

#### From Our Test Kitchen, p. 68

You can find Thai curry paste in Asian markets or in the Asian section of your grocery store. For an online source, try [Templeofthai.com](http://Templeofthai.com), which not only carries red, green, and yellow curry pastes (\$2.89), but also ingredients like lemongrass (4 ounces for \$2.99) and shrimp paste (\$2.99).



## Equipment resources

Here's more information on where to find the products mentioned in the Equipment department, starting on p. 26.

### Food processor update

To order the redesigned lid for Cuisinart's Prep 11 Plus, call Cuisinart at 800-726-0190 and ask for part number WBA-DLC11N; it's \$74. The model number for the updated food processor is DLC-2011; it's \$200 at [Cooking.com](http://Cooking.com).

### Bench knives

Bench knives, or dough scrapers, with rulers along their edge, are made by KitchenAid (\$10; [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)), Oxo (\$8; [Cookswares.com](http://Cookswares.com); 800-915-9788), and Sur La Table (\$7; [Surlatable.com](http://Surlatable.com); 800-243-0852). The one shown above is from Pedrini (\$9 at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)).



### Cream whipper

The iSi Cream Whippers operate on nitrous oxide chargers, which are available from [Creamright.com](http://Creamright.com) (866-944-7427), where 24 chargers are \$12.25.

### Mandoline

The Oxo Good Grips mandoline is \$69.99 at [Thegadgetsources.com](http://Thegadgetsources.com). Replacement blades and other parts for the mandoline are available directly from the company, at [Oxo.com](http://Oxo.com) or 800-545-4411. A replacement blade is \$6, a thickness cylinder is \$15, and a food holder is \$6.

### Woks

The reversible wok grate pictured is made by GE; Fisher-Paykel also offers one. The wok burner pictured is made by Wolf; other manufacturers include Thermador, Jade, Gaggenau, and Five-Star. Viking makes the separate wok unit pictured; Thermador and DCS offer them, too.

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# nutritioninformation

Recipe	Page	Calories		Protein	Carb	Fats (g)			Chol.	Sodium	Fiber	Notes	
		total	from fat	(g)	(g)	total	sat	mono	poly	(mg)	(mg)	(g)	(analysis per serving)
Summer Menu		38											
Olive-Oil-Fried Almonds		243	197	8	7	22	2	14	5	0	298	4	based on 8 servings
Sun-Ripened Tomato & Olive Salad		166	128	2	9	14	2	11	2	0	720	2	based on 6 servings
Romaine Hearts w/Lemon Vinaigrette & Shaved Parmesan		101	90	1	2	10	2	7	1	2	155	0	based on 6 servings
Herb-Marinated Skirt Steaks		476	263	48	2	29	9	18	2	129	433	0	based on 8 servings
Pesto-Style Salsa Verde		220	210	1	2	23	3	18	2	0	94	1	based on 8 servings
Berry Buttermilk Cake w/Vanilla-Scented Crème Fraiche		355	138	5	48	16	10	3	1	77	295	1	based on 16 servings
Vegetable Salads		44											
Summer Squash Salad w/Lemon, Capers & Parmesan		148	131	2	4	15	2	11	1	1	217	1	based on 8 servings
Slivered Red Pepper, Carrot & Snap Pea Salad		99	65	2	8	7	1	5	1	0	185	2	based on 8 servings
Green Bean Salad w/ Corn, Cherry Tomatoes & Basil		167	89	3	19	10	1	7	1	0	143	4	based on 8 servings
Jicama, Avocado, Radish & Orange Salad w/ Cilantro		215	135	3	21	15	3	10	2	0	148	9	based on 8 servings
Seared Scallops		48											
Seared Scallops		218	94	25	4	10	1	7	1	50	524	0	based on 3 servings
Scallops in Classic Herb Butter Sauce		346	195	26	5	22	9	10	2	80	668	0	based on 3 servings
Scallops in Spicy Red Pepper & Cilantro Sauce		312	179	26	6	20	3	14	2	50	665	1	based on 3 servings
Scallops in Spicy Coconut Curry Sauce		377	232	27	10	26	12	10	3	50	691	2	based on 3 servings
Kebabs		50											
Spicy Smoky Mexican Pork Kebabs		332	164	34	7	19	4	8	6	100	470	2	based on 6 servings
Lemony Moroccan-Style Chicken Kebabs		396	191	38	13	21	6	9	4	135	583	2	based on 6 servings
Spicy Thai Shrimp Kebabs w/ Chile Lemongrass Dipping Sauce		309	107	38	12	12	2	5	4	332	1107	3	based on 4 servings
Summer Rolls		55											
Summer Rolls		190	4	3	44	0	0	0	0	0	15	1	per two roll serving
Classic Boiled Shrimp Summer Rolls		211	6	8	44	1	0	0	0	43	64	1	per two roll serving
Grilled Sesame Beef Summer Rolls		279	50	13	45	6	2	2	1	16	315	1	per two roll serving
Honey Ginger Chicken Summer Rolls		278	43	12	47	5	1	2	2	23	617	1	per two roll serving
Ginger Sesame Tofu Summer Rolls		302	78	11	47	9	1	3	4	0	307	2	per two roll serving
Nuoc Cham		34	0	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	1043	0	per 1 oz., approx 2 Tbs
Pineapple Lime Dipping Sauce		45	10	1	9	1	0	0	0	0	938	0	per 1 oz., approx 2 Tbs
Chicken Wings		60											
Master Recipe for Grilled Chicken Wings		87	31	13	0	3	1	1	1	37	264	0	based on 5 servings
Wings with Buffalo Style Sauce w/Rosemary & Lemon		173	112	13	1	13	7	3	1	61	911	0	based on 5 servings
Wings with Honey-Mustard Thyme Sauce		158	40	14	16	4	1	1	1	37	635	1	based on 5 servings
Wings with Scallion Jalapeño Salsa		197	133	14	2	15	3	10	2	37	379	1	based on 5 servings
Wings with Asian-Style Barbecue Sauce		118	32	14	7	4	1	1	1	37	926	0	based on 5 servings
Wings with Spicy Peanut Sauce		224	123	16	10	14	3	6	4	37	835	1	based on 5 servings
Wings with Sweet & Sour Orange Glaze		169	32	13	22	4	1	1	1	37	545	0	based on 5 servings
Strawberry Desserts		62											
Roasted Strawberry Shortcakes w/Vanilla Biscuits		509	231	6	63	26	16	6	1	95	331	3	based on 6 servings
Roasted Strawberries		143	4	1	36	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	based on 4 servings
Strawberry Whipped Cream		35	30	0	1	3	2	1	0	12	11	0	per 13g, approx 2 Tbs.
Chocolate-Dipped Strawberries		105	53	1	12	6	3	2	1	0	14	3	per 2 strawberries
Triple Strawberry Ice Cream Sundaes		365	155	5	51	17	9	6	1	51	87	4	based on 6 servings
Strawberry Crisp		222	97	3	31	11	4	5	1	15	170	3	based on 8 servings
Lemon or Lime Sugar		97	0	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	based on 1 serving
Mint Sugar		97	0	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	based on 1 serving
Cardamom Sugar		98	0	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	based on 1 serving
Fennel Sugar		98	1	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	based on 1 serving
Ginger Sugar		124	0	0	32	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	based on 1 serving
Vanilla Sugar		97	0	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	based on 1 serving
Test Kitchen		68											
Slightly Spicy Sugar Snap Peas w/Mint & Lime		132	67	4	13	8	5	2	0	20	265	4	based on 3 servings
Quick & Delicious		86c											
Arugula & Fried Mozzarella Salad w/Chunky Tomato Basil Vinaigrette		444	348	14	11	39	12	19	3	79	649	2	based on 4 servings
Bibb & Cilantro Salad w/Shrimp & Toasted Corn		456	213	39	23	24	4	17	3	332	518	3	based on 4 servings
Grilled Lamb Kebab Salad w/Cucumber, Tomatoes & Pita		657	397	38	29	44	8	30	4	100	471	6	based on 4 servings
Tuna & White Bean Salad w/Arugula, Yellow Tomatoes & Olives		536	318	34	21	35	5	26	4	51	702	7	based on 4 servings
Grilled Eggplant Salad w/Feta, Pine Nuts & Garlicky Yogurt Dressing		381	298	9	15	33	8	17	6	31	627	6	based on 4 servings
Asian Steak, Watercress & Spinach Salad w/Hoisin Vinaigrette		419	211	32	21	24	6	10	6	74	699	4	based on 4 servings
Red Leaf & Red Cabbage Salad w/ Grilled Tarragon Chicken		477	340	23	13	38	8	24	4	52	855	3	based on 4 servings

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at Nutritional Solutions in Melville, New York. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in the

calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used. When the

quantity of salt and pepper aren't specified, the analysis is based on ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for entrées, and ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper per serving for side dishes.

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Savory  
salt from  
harvested

# Lavender

The month of June finds many farmers harvesting early tomatoes, peaches, and sunflowers. Nigel Walker does that, too, but mostly he's tending to the lavender fields at Eatwell Farm, his small organic farm in California's Sacramento Valley. Lavender isn't exactly a commercial crop, and Nigel is used to odd looks from his larger-scale, more conventional neighbors. "What the hell is that blue stuff growing in your field and can I take some home to my wife?" is the usual response," he laughs.

With the lavender, Nigel and his partner, Chris Paugh, make a fragrant lavender salt that's a delicious cooking ingredient. "You can use lavender salt in much the same way you'd use thyme or rosemary and salt," he says.

After many trials with different strains of lavender ("there are hundreds," he says) and scores of different sea salts, Nigel settled on one lavender variety that he feels is best for cooking: aromatic but not soapy-tasting, flavorful but not overpowering.

Lavender salt is hardly a common ingredient, but it may be catching on. "One evening, I got a call from a frantic customer saying, 'Help! I'm in LA and I've run out of your salt,'" he recalls. "Then I knew I was onto something."

—Amy Albert, senior editor



1. California's Sacramento Valley is hot during the day and cooler at night—an ideal climate for growing lavender. 2. Nigel and his crew harvest at sunrise, working quickly before the bees get to the lavender, and while the air is still cool enough to preserve the essential oils. 3. After the lavender is cut and bundled, Rosario Santos gathers the bunches and hustles them to a shaded

hut to dry. 4. Nigel and Chris hang bunches of lavender to dry on simple trestles of two-by-fours lined with nails. 5. Chris sieves the lavender for the salt by hand, rubbing it over a framed screen to remove the flowers from the stems. 6. The salt is lovely on a roasting chicken, lamb chops, or salmon, on steamed vegetables with butter, in a red wine vinaigrette, and even in scrambled eggs.

For more information, see p. 82.



BY EVA KATZ

## Main-dish salads

are summer's answer to the one-bowl week-night meal, and so easy to put together that you'll soon find yourself improvising to create your own versions. Each of these recipes is light but complete, starting with crisp greens and vegetables and then adding cheese, poultry, fish, or meat to round out the dish. While these salads can be served family-style in a large serving bowl or platter, I prefer to plate them individually to ensure that the ingredients get thoroughly dressed and equally distributed. Start by dressing and seasoning the greens and portioning them onto plates. Dress the remaining ingredients separately and distribute them evenly over the greens.

For great wine pairing suggestions for all of these salads, see *Enjoying Wine*, p. 22.



### Bibb & Cilantro Salad with Shrimp & Toasted Corn

*Serves four as a light main course.*

**2 heads bibb or Boston lettuce, washed, dried, and torn into bite-size pieces (about 8 cups)**  
**2 cups packed cilantro leaves, washed and dried**  
**¼ cup finely diced red onion**  
**3 Tbs. fresh lime juice**  
**2 tsp. honey**  
**½ tsp. fish sauce**  
**¼ cup plus 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**2 cups fresh corn kernels**  
**1 fresh jalapeño, cored, seeded, and finely diced**  
**1½ lb. large shrimp, peeled and deveined**

Put the lettuce and cilantro in a large bowl, cover with a damp paper towel, and refrigerate. In a small bowl, combine the onion, lime juice, honey, and fish sauce. Whisk in ¼ cup of the oil. Season with ¼ tsp. salt and several grinds of pepper.

Heat the remaining 2 Tbs. oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat

until shimmering. Add the corn and jalapeño and cook, stirring frequently, until the corn is golden, 4 to 5 minutes. Add the shrimp and cook until pink and cooked through, about 4 minutes. Remove from the heat, add 2 Tbs. of the dressing, and toss well.

Toss the lettuce and cilantro with the remaining dressing. Portion the greens onto four plates. Spoon the corn and shrimp evenly onto the greens. Serve immediately.

#### Serving suggestion:

**This salad makes a great wrapped sandwich; just wrap portions of salad in warm tortillas.**

**Note:** You can substitute frozen corn for fresh. Let it thaw almost all the way and expect it to take a little longer to turn golden.





## Grilled Lamb Kebab Salad with Cucumber, Tomatoes & Pita

*Serves four as a main course.*

- 6 Tbs. fresh lemon juice**
- 2 large cloves garlic, mashed or crushed through a garlic press**
- 1¼ tsp. ground allspice**
- ¾ tsp. kosher salt; more as needed**
- ¾ tsp. freshly ground black pepper**
- ½ cup plus 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 lb. boneless lamb leg or shoulder meat, trimmed well and cut into 1½-inch cubes (to yield about 1½ to 1¾ lb.)**
- 1 small head romaine lettuce, washed, dried, and torn or cut into large bite-size pieces (about 6 cups)**
- 1 large cucumber, peeled, seeded, and cut into large dice**
- 2 tomatoes, cut into large dice**
- 1 cup packed mint leaves (from about 2½ to 3 oz. mint sprigs), roughly chopped**
- 2 pita breads, 5 to 6 inches in diameter**

Heat a gas grill to medium. In a small bowl, whisk the lemon juice, garlic, allspice, salt, and pepper. Whisking constantly, drizzle in ½ cup of the oil. Toss the lamb pieces

in a medium bowl with 2 Tbs. of the vinaigrette. Thread the lamb onto three or four metal skewers; sprinkle with salt.

Combine the lettuce, cucumber, tomatoes, and all but about 2 Tbs. of the mint in a large bowl. Using a knife, split the pitas and pull the sides apart. Brush the pita halves with the remaining 2 Tbs. oil. Grill until crisp and charred in places, 30 to 60 seconds per side, and transfer to a plate.

Grill the lamb, turning the skewers every 90 seconds or so, until cooked to medium, 6 to 8 minutes. Remove from the grill and let the lamb rest for 5 minutes. Meanwhile, rip the pitas into large bite-size pieces, add to the bowl with the vegetables, and toss. Slide the lamb off the skewers and cut each cube in half. In a medium bowl, toss the lamb with 3 Tbs. of the vinaigrette (whisk to recombine first).

Toss the vegetables with the remaining dressing and season to taste with salt and pepper. Portion the vegetables onto four plates. Top the salads with the lamb and sprinkle with the remaining mint. Serve immediately.



## Asian Steak, Watercress & Spinach Salad with Hoisin Vinaigrette

*Serves four as a main course.*

- 2 bunches watercress (6 to 7 oz. each), thick stems trimmed, tender stems and leaves separated into bite-size sprigs, washed and dried**
- 4 oz. baby spinach (about 4 loosely packed cups), washed and dried**
- 4 scallions (white and light green parts only), minced**
- 1 Tbs. rice vinegar**
- 2 tsp. hoisin sauce**
- 2 tsp. soy sauce**
- 1 tsp. finely grated fresh ginger**
- 2 Tbs. toasted sesame oil**
- 2 Tbs. vegetable or peanut oil; more for cooking the steak**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 1½ lb. beef strip steaks (about 1 inch thick)**
- 1 8-oz. can sliced water chestnuts, drained**

Put the watercress and spinach in a large bowl, cover with a damp paper towel, and refrigerate.

In a small bowl, whisk the minced scallions, vinegar, hoisin sauce, soy sauce, and

ginger. Whisk in the sesame oil and vegetable oil. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Heat a large, heavy pan (preferably cast iron) over medium-high heat for at least 1 minute. Use paper towels to pat the steaks dry. Season them generously with salt and pepper. Rub the steaks with oil, put them in the pan and cook them until well browned, about 4 minutes. Flip the steaks and continue to cook, about another 3 minutes for medium rare. Transfer the steaks to a cutting board, let them rest for 5 minutes, and then slice them thinly.

Add the water chestnuts to the bowl of greens. Whisk the vinaigrette and toss the greens and water chestnuts with just enough of it to coat (there should be a few tablespoons vinaigrette left over). Taste and add salt and pepper as needed. Portion the greens and water chestnuts among four plates. Arrange the beef over the greens, drizzle with any remaining dressing, and serve.



## Arugula & Fried Mozzarella Salad with Tomato-Basil Vinaigrette

*Serves four as a light lunch.*

- 1 large (about 7 oz.) smoked mozzarella**
- 1 large egg**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 cup fine fresh breadcrumbs**
- 1½ cups medium diced fresh tomatoes**
- ⅓ cup loosely packed basil leaves, roughly chopped**
- 1 medium clove garlic, minced (about 1 tsp.)**
- ¼ cup plus 3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 tsp. balsamic vinegar**
- 5 oz. baby arugula (about 6 cups loosely packed), washed and dried**

Slice the mozzarella into eight slices and then again in half crosswise, so that you have 16 pieces of cheese. Whisk the egg in a medium bowl with a pinch of salt and pepper. Put the breadcrumbs in another medium bowl. Working with a few pieces at a time, dip the cheese in the egg, turning to coat all sides of the cheese. Dredge the cheese in the breadcrumbs, pressing to help the crumbs adhere and cover the cheese as much as possible. Transfer the breaded cheese slices to a plate and refrigerate until ready to cook. You can prepare the cheese up to 1 hour

ahead. Discard any leftover egg and crumbs.

In a small bowl, combine the tomatoes, basil, and garlic and season with ½ tsp. salt and a few grinds of pepper. Let the tomato mixture sit for 5 minutes and then add ¼ cup of the oil and the vinegar.

Heat 1½ Tbs. of the oil in a 10-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Put half of the cheese in the pan and cook until the breadcrumbs turn golden, 30 to 60 seconds. Use two forks to turn the cheese and cook until the second side is golden, another 30 to 60 seconds. Transfer the cheese to a plate. Using the remaining 1½ Tbs. oil, repeat with the second batch of cheese.

Put the arugula in a large bowl. Stir the tomato mixture and toss it with the arugula. Taste and add salt and pepper as needed. Portion the salad among four plates. Arrange four pieces of cheese on top of each salad and serve immediately.

**Tip:** If you want to turn this into a main-course dinner salad, serve it with chicken or pork sausage.



## Tuna & White Bean Salad with Arugula, Yellow Tomatoes & Olives

*Serves four as a main course.*

- 5 oz. (about 6 cups loosely packed) baby arugula leaves, washed and dried**
- 1½ Tbs. balsamic vinegar**
- 1½ Tbs. fresh lemon juice**
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped**
- ½ cup plus 1 to 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 4 tuna steaks (about 1½ inches thick), 4 to 6 oz. each**
- 1 15½-oz. can Great Northern or cannellini beans, drained and rinsed**
- ½ pint yellow teardrop or grape tomatoes, halved lengthwise**
- ½ cup green olives, pitted and roughly chopped**
- 1 tsp. finely grated lemon zest**

Put the arugula in a large bowl, cover with a damp paper towel, and refrigerate.

In a small bowl, whisk the balsamic vinegar, lemon juice, garlic, and ½ cup oil. Season with salt and pepper.

Heat a 12-inch heavy skillet over medium-high heat.

Brush the tuna generously with the remaining 1 to 2 Tbs. oil and season with salt and pepper. Cook the fish until the first side is browned, about 3 minutes. Flip and continue to cook until the second side is browned and the tuna is cooked to your liking, about 3 minutes more for medium rare. Transfer to a plate and keep warm.

In a medium bowl, combine the beans, tomatoes, olives, and lemon zest and toss with just enough of the dressing to coat, about 3 Tbs. Season generously with salt and pepper. Toss the arugula with just enough dressing to coat lightly, about 5 Tbs., and season with salt and pepper. Portion the arugula onto four plates and top with a mound of the bean mixture. Slice the tuna into ¼-inch slices and arrange on the arugula around the beans. Drizzle the tuna with a little of the remaining dressing and serve.





## Red Leaf & Red Cabbage Salad with Grilled Tarragon Chicken

*Serves four as a light main course.*

- 1 head red leaf lettuce, washed, dried, and torn into bite-size pieces (about 10 cups)**
- 1 cup shredded red cabbage (about ¼ small head)**
- 2 Tbs. red-wine vinegar**
- 5 Tbs. chopped fresh tarragon**
- 2 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. Dijon mustard**
- 1 Tbs. honey**
- 1 large shallot, finely chopped**
- ⅓ cup plus 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 3 oz. crumbled blue cheese (¾ cup)**
- ½ cup toasted slivered almonds**

Heat a gas grill to medium. Put the lettuce and cabbage in a large bowl, cover with a damp paper towel, and refrigerate. In a small bowl, whisk the vinegar with 2 Tbs. of the tarragon, 1 tsp. of the mustard, 1 tsp. of the honey, and the shallot. Whisk in ⅓ cup of the oil and season with salt and pepper.

Remove the tenderloins from the chicken breasts and reserve for another use. Put the chicken in a medium bowl and season with salt and a

generous amount of pepper. In a small bowl, whisk the remaining 3 Tbs. tarragon, 2 Tbs. mustard, 2 tsp. honey, and 1 Tbs. oil until well combined. Spread this mixture all over the chicken.

Put the chicken on the grill, cover, and cook the chicken on one side until grill marks appear, 5 to 6 minutes. Flip the chicken over, cover, and continue to cook until the chicken is cooked through, firm, and golden brown all over, another 4 to 6 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a clean cutting board and let rest for 5 minutes. Slice the chicken crosswise on an angle into ½-inch slices.

Toss the greens with just enough of the dressing to coat well. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Portion the greens among four plates. Arrange the sliced chicken on and around the greens and drizzle with a little of the remaining dressing. Sprinkle with the blue cheese and almonds and serve.

**Note:** It's important to cook the chicken over moderate heat. If the grill is too hot, the honey in the glaze will burn.



## Grilled Eggplant Salad with Feta, Pine Nuts & Garlicky Yogurt Dressing

*Serves four as a light vegetarian dinner.*

- 2 hearts of romaine, leaves separated (save the small leaves for another use), washed, and dried**
- 1 large eggplant (about 1½ pounds), cut crosswise into ½-inch slices**
- 5 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- ¾ cup plain yogurt**
- 2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice**
- 1 small clove garlic, mashed to a paste or crushed through a garlic press**
- ¼ tsp. ground cumin**
- ½ cup tightly packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, finely chopped**
- ¼ lb. feta, crumbled (¾ cup)**
- ⅓ cup toasted pine nuts**

Put the romaine in a large bowl, cover with a damp paper towel, and refrigerate.

Heat a gas grill to medium high. Brush the eggplant slices with 3 Tbs. of the oil and season with salt and pepper. In a small bowl, combine the remaining 2 Tbs. olive oil with the yogurt, lemon

juice, garlic, cumin, and parsley. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Grill the eggplant slices until softened and browned on the first side, 3 to 4 minutes. Flip them and continue to cook until the eggplant is browned and cooked through, another 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer to a plate.

Portion the romaine onto four plates, lay the eggplant slices on top, and drizzle them with the dressing. Top with the feta and pine nuts.

**Note:** This salad can be served warm or at room temperature and works very well arranged on a platter and served as a side dish for a buffet.

*Eva Katz is a recipe developer and food writer who lives in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. ♦*